

**ADDRESSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS TO LEARNING AT A  
TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
(TVET) COLLEGE: BOJANALA DISTRICT, NORTH WEST (NW)**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I, **Sinnah Lenyai** state that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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DATE: *23 DECEMBER 2019*

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my husband, Lesiba Hendrick Lenyai, my children, Blessing, Kelebogile, Tshiamo, my daughter in law, Mmapule Lenyai and granddaughters Onalemaatla and Khanyisile.

Last but not least, I dedicate this work to my late beloved mother, Dikate Hermina Lehobye and my father in law Paul Phalatse Lenyai.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine how a specific group of lecturers identified and supported students experiencing language barriers. The study aimed to make a contribution by adding to literature on how language barriers affect teaching and learning at TVET level. The study was guided by the theory of Lev Vygotsky, known as the Sociocultural and Cognitive Perspective on Language and Communication Barriers in Learning.

The study was conducted within a qualitative, constructive paradigm. Interview schedules were used for data collection. The researcher used semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions for data collection. Six National Certificate (Vocational) programme lecturers for NC (V) level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) from the selected TVET College in Bojanala District, North West (NW) province were interviewed. The interviewees were purposively selected from three campuses in the district.

Findings revealed that lecturers are affected by lack of support, lack of resources and lack of staff development when addressing language barriers experienced by students. The study recommended that the Department of Higher Education and Training should provide a budget to provide professional development to lecturers teaching students experiencing language barriers.

**Key Terms:** Barriers to learning, lecturers, professional development, students, technical vocational education and training.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

DHET: Department of Higher Education and Training

DoE: Department of Education

EWP6: Education White Paper 6

HoD: Head of Department

HSRC: Human Sciences Research Council

IE: Inclusive Education

ISO: International Organization for Standardization

LoLT: Language of Learning and Teaching

NC (V): National Certificate (Vocational)

NW: North West

SS: Student Support

SSS: Student Support Services

TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training

ZPD : Zone of Proximal Development

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

A Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college is an establishment that provides vocational and occupational education and training at National Qualification Framework (NQF) levels 2, 3, and 4. The TVET College under study opened in 2002 in the North West Province and it falls under the Further Education and Training (FET) band of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which was established in 2002. TVET colleges prepare learners for the career of their choice in a skilled trade. The entry requirement is completion of grade 9, 10, 11 or 12 at high school. TVET colleges fall under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and are fully equipped to educate and train students, and to provide them with pathways to success.

TVET colleges offer two streams of study, namely National Certificate (Vocational) or NC (V) and Report 191/NATED programmes. The NC (V) is a three-year qualification offered at levels 2, 3, and 4. Each level takes a full year of study. The programme includes theory and practical work. Report 191/NATED programmes are post grade 12 Engineering (Construction, Electrical, and Mechanical) or Business Studies. A full range of courses in Business Studies is available, including Financial Management, Human Resources Management, and Management Assistance.

Quality assurance is maintained constantly at the colleges. The Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training under Umalusi upgrades and checks learning attainment and verifies such attainment after students have gained the required levels. Umalusi's mission is to:

- Make sure that a quality structure is developed for public and distant schooling and training
- Give quality assurance of qualifications and curricula
- Ensure that the assessment is fair, logical and authentic. (Umalusi, 2008)

### **1.2 THE CASE STUDY CONTEXT**

The vision of the selected TVET College is to become a worldwide college of high-quality education, surpassing community needs. Its mission is to offer high quality education and training that is affordable, relevant, and that contributes to developing individuals through:

- excellent use of resources,
- appropriately skilled staff, and
- creative and new models of delivery (Reference withheld due to confidentiality).

This college has also been identified for specialised occupational programmes in the Civil Engineering field and offers a full qualification in Community House Building (CHB) NQF level 2.

The college caters for students in NC (V) and Report 191/NATED Engineering and Business Studies. Compulsory subjects on all three NQF levels are Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, English First Additional Language (FAL), and Life Orientation. Other subjects are Core (specialising) subjects according to different departments at the college. The researcher of the current study teaches English FAL on NQF levels 2, 3 and 4.

The college has a roll of about 2000 students from various localities, mostly around the rural areas of Madibeng Local Municipality. Eight hundred of these students are enrolled in NC (V) programmes on NQF levels 1 to 3 and the rest in Report 191/NATED programmes. Almost all students are from previously disadvantaged areas.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In South African education prior to 1994, students were separated according to skin colour (race) and were also separated on the basis of disability. The education process at the time segregated students so that those who were disabled were prevented from obtaining the same scope in education and denied the right to enjoy their education with students of their age. Teaching Departments in TVET Colleges did not make any provision for accommodating students with barriers to learning. There were discrepancies in the delivery of specialised teaching by nationality, and black disabled children were also not provisioned at the pre-school

level (Department of Education, 1997). Furthermore, educational institutions were mostly geared towards learning and teaching in one language only, so that learners from different language backgrounds often struggled to cope.

Under the current dispensation, teachers and lecturers are required to give students with language barriers support to enhance their performance in the classroom. Inclusive education, which was instituted in 1996, has also forced faculties in TVET Colleges to assist all students despite their differences in race, economic status, social class, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation and ability.

Language barriers can arise even when people are speaking the same language, but misunderstandings occur because they have completely different meanings in mind for certain words. These semantic barriers can originate from differences in home language, linguistic experience, and culture. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010: 24) maintained that assistance for students experiencing semantic barriers to education ought to be offered in a wide-ranging supervision context in teaching amenities. The key point remains in the context, and these authors encourage educators at all stages of teaching to play a prominent role in recognising, assessing, and tackling any semantic barrier to education as soon as it is noticed. If students encounter language barriers to learning and their lecturers do not give them adequate support, actual learning will not be achieved.

TVET College lecturers, like all other educators, are expected to assist students experiencing barriers to learning, but they appear to possess neither the knowledge nor the expertise to do so (Mahlo 2011:8). Student Support Services (SSS), which is a body in the campus dealing with all the students' needs, should be in charge of:

- equipping lecturers to deal with barriers to learning,
- enriching the quality of students' life,
- being a partner in student development, both personal and academic,
- supporting and enabling equity, and
- participating in active partnership with students, the institution and all other stakeholders.

It seems, then, that the SSS may be co-opted to assist lecturers in their task of inclusion and assisting students who experience semantic barriers.

The medium of instruction at the selected TVET College is English. The majority (about 80%) of students at the college struggle with this language. Many find it very difficult to complete their studies successfully because their first language is different from the medium of instruction used. Students are not skilled in the use of English language because they rarely hear or practice it at home or in the community as it is their second, sometimes third or fourth language.

The study focused on how lecturers identified and supported students who experience language barriers in the classroom. Students may experience language barriers when they are taught through the medium of English which is their second language. It is hoped that the study will assist in identifying the specific language-related barriers students experience language barriers and how students can be supported.

#### ***1.4. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM***

Many students in the selected college come from disadvantaged home environments where levels of literacy could be low. Most of the students only speak English during the lessons in their classroom. Communication at home and also outside the classroom occurs only in their home language. In most instances they are not given any assistance with their homework. The unavailability of English resources such as magazines and newspapers aggravate the students' difficulty with proficiency in English and in the end causes a barrier to learning (MacKay, 2014).

The problem is further exacerbated by lecturers' inability to read and write African languages like Setswana, IsiZulu, or Xitsonga (Kretzer & Kaschula, 2019: pp.239-252). This means that students can only express themselves in a largely unfamiliar language which does not allow them to construct and communicate thoughts. In effect, each test and examination become a language test rather than a test of knowledge and insight.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study sought to address the following research questions:

1.5.1 How do lecturers identify the learning needs of students experiencing language barriers and provide appropriate support?

1.5.2 The sub-questions to this question were:

- How are the identified students supported?
- What support can be given to lecturers dealing with language barriers to education in TVET colleges?

The study had the following aims:

- to explore how lecturers identify students who experience language barriers.
- to establish how these students are supported once identified.
- to identify the kind of assistance available for lecturers in dealing with language barriers in the classroom.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the study is in its potential to create greater understanding of the support available/unavailable to students who experience language barriers at TVET level. It is also significant in that it highlights the support needed by lecturers who work with affected students. The study was also aimed at making recommendations to educational planners and policymakers to develop and improve lecturers' skills and ability to address language barriers in their classrooms. The research furthermore sought to indicate how a skilled Student Support (SS) could provide knowledge to lecturers in approaching language problems in the classroom.

## **1.7 LITERATURE PREVIEW**

A literature search was conducted on addressing language barriers that students experience at the TVET college sector. The literature review looked at studies of



students from different countries that experience language barriers, with the aim of informing the study's main question about addressing language barriers experienced by students in TVET colleges.

Vocabulary understanding is a major contributor to overall comprehension in many content areas, and an adequate vocabulary of academic concepts unlocks the world of capability, proficiency, and acquiring expertise. Students who encounter problems in the medium of instruction, in this case English, experience major challenges in the management of all other subjects and they end up not performing well academically.

Wolf (as cited in Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006, p.195) contended that "language is not the whole lot in education but then without it the whole lot in education is nothing." The issue of language in South Africa is an extremely complicated matter and there is always a disquieting possibility that amidst the raging social and political debates, the important cognitive, scholastic, and emotional implications of language in educational development could be neglected or totally overlooked (Heckman, 2013).

The Statutes of the Republic of South Africa recognises eleven official languages with equitable use (Skovsholm, 2000). Nevertheless, the medium of instruction in TVET colleges is English, and for most students it is their first or second additional language. This situation becomes a barrier to learning for students. Because most of them lack the necessary language skills, effective teaching and learning cannot take place (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2006).

Results from a study administered through the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) indicated that the majority of parents in South Africa wish their children to be taught in English (Panther, 2008) even though English is their additional language. However, many students have difficulty in understanding and using it in the communication process due to limited exposure. This problem persists even when learners reach higher education levels.

In 1997 the DoE identified ten key barriers to education and development, one of them being learning through a language that is a second or third language (DoE, 1997). A barrier to learning that remains unaddressed can cause learning breakdown

or even failure (DoE, 1997). Students can end up dropping-out if they are not supported to overcome this barrier.

An educator in the classroom is predominantly accountable for understanding as well as addressing language barriers. The lecturer should be able to identify students experiencing language barriers among others in the classroom situation and also be able to support them in overcoming such barriers.

## **1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical context is located in the field of education and also anchored in literature centred on the research topic. The theoretical framework of a study enables discussion and investigation of the study (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2009:26). A theoretical framework refers to a particular intangible frame which can be described as “an arrangement of the main ideas of the study” (Henning et al, 2009:26)

An article under the heading “Languages bedevilling teaching” published as part of a report by the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (Child, 2013) highlights students’ first three years of school. The report focused on students’ language challenges and found the following: “When students do not speak the language of instruction, they find learning difficult and academic achievement is undermined” (Child, 2013). Similarly, Basic Education Minister, Angie Motshekga, pointed out that higher level of literacy can be expected from students when a home language is used in schools (Child, 2013). These two observations could equally apply to students at TVET colleges.

The purpose of the current research was to investigate how lecturers identify and support students who experience language barriers at a particular TVET College. The language barrier is a major concern among students of the selected TVET College, since they are taught in English which is their first additional language.

The research was guided by Vygotsky’s Sociocultural and Cognitivist theory (Doolittle, 1995). Vygotsky’s focal statement was that children are embedded in dissimilar sociocultural contexts and their intellectual growth is advanced throughout

societal collaboration with more skilled individuals. This acknowledgement of the social component in both cognitive and psychosocial development was a major contribution and possibly laid the foundation for constructivism. (The Psychology Notes HQ, 2018)

## **1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative methodology was employed in this study to gain more information about and a greater understanding of ways to address diversity in inclusive classrooms. Data was collected during campus visits, from classroom observation and interviews. This strategy enabled the researcher to generate consistent and detailed research reports on the teaching and learning processes in inclusive classrooms.

### **1.9.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A paradigm is a shared set of assumptions and perceptual orientations that determines how members of research communities view both the phenomena studied in their field and the research methods that should be employed to study those phenomena. An interpretive research paradigm assumes that social reality is shaped by human experiences and social contexts. In the current study, lecturers as individuals were used to clarify the actual problem. The interpretive paradigm envisages the lecturers as most involved in the problem studied. Explanatory studies depend on the personal involvement of participants.

Creswell (2012) argued that this type of study outlines the real-world experiences of individuals about certain circumstances. The current research is based on the understanding that facts and perceptions are socially interpreted. The ability to see and involve the participants controls the reality of a situation or experience. However, it is also true that an individual's actual experiences depend on his or her personal understanding of a general situation (Wahyuni, 2013).

The interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to explore the causes and reasons of students experiencing language barriers at TVET campuses. This research method provided the researcher with an opportunity to interact with the participants and to gain information about their experiences of students encountering language barriers. Through the interpretive paradigm the researcher was able to draw a clear and logical conclusion of the views of the participants with the understanding that people may view the same phenomenon differently.

### **1.9.1 RESEARCH SITE**

Three campuses of a TVET college in the Bojanala District in the North West Province were selected.

### **1.9.2 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING**

The researcher purposefully selected 6 lecturers teaching in the NC (V) programme. These participants have experienced the problem of students encountering language barriers. Lecturers were identified based on the number of years they have been teaching at the TVET College. The researcher contacted the identified participants, explained the research project and obtained their consent. The criteria the researcher used to select participants included the following:

- Full-time permanent College lecturers
- Both male and female lecturers

As stated, the study used non-probability, purposive sampling. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), non-probability sampling is when the researcher selects a certain group that excludes the broader population; in this case the researcher selected the group with the most experience in teaching at this level. Purposive sampling was used as it allowed the researcher to select the lecturers based on their knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **1.9.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE**

A successful researcher must be acquainted with different data collection techniques. It is also important that the researcher understands both the advantages and disadvantages of the data collection techniques.

#### **1.9.3.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

An interview is a pre-planned formal oral communication between an interviewer and an interviewee where communication is face-to-face with immediate feedback. Delpont, De Vos, Fouche and Strydom (2011:342) stated that an interview is the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research. Interviewing entails direct exchange with a specific individual or group that is believed to possess the knowledge they seek. A face-to-face interview approach was used to collect information. The interview questions were the instrument used to collect data. One-on-one interviews were conducted, and data was transcribed by the researcher

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain in-depth information from interviewees (participants) as this permitted the participants to give their specific opinions and views about the language barriers students experience at this TVET College. Individual interviews were held with lecturers in their own classes and were recorded with their permission. During an interview, field records were taken based on the interaction between the lecturer and students experiencing language barriers, as well as observations regarding challenges lecturers experience in identifying and addressing the problems.

The process whereby raw data is transformed into a standardised form is known as coding (Babbie, 2007). Qualitative information was collected and transcribed by coding the results obtained from the interviews. Coding of data was carried out manually, and the researcher subsequently determined the important themes and saw what challenges were more relevant and more important than others (Neuman, 1997). After the interpretations had been done, the researcher searched for supporting documents to extend the validity of this study.

#### **1.9.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

The researcher transcribed data obtained from the interviews and analysed it by writing summative notes of the important aspects. The researcher coded the results obtained from the interviews. Coding is the process whereby raw data is transformed into a standardised form (Babbie, 2007). The data were interpreted and organised into categories and then themes which were guided by the research questions and objectives. In this study the coded information will not be outlined in the original format, but it will be interpreted and represented by the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Johnson and Christensen (2008: 531) explain the process of analysing data as designing interpretations from unpolished information. Furthermore, Johnson and Christensen (2008: 531) affirm that data analysis starts early in a qualitative research enquiry and continues throughout the research inquiry. Qualitative investigators rotate between the collection of data (e.g. physical artefacts and field notes, focus groups, interviews, inquiry documents, observations) and data analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007: 159) support the perspective that analysing data entails a procedure of methodically probing and positioning the records of consultation, ground records, and other resources that the researcher gathered to obtain results. Data analysis involves engaging with information, arranging information, splitting information into convenient components, coding information and seeking for designs.

Qualitative researches, according to Creswell (2009:175), construct groupings and topics by arranging information in conceptual components of data. After the interim results were obtained, the participants had an opportunity to check and verify the written version of their responses in preliminary themes. Finally, a summary of all the results was put together in which themes were used to report the findings of the research.

### **1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The main issue in appraising qualitative research is trustworthiness and/or dependability. This concept of trustworthiness evaluates research quality in terms of four concepts: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, and 2013:236).

#### **1.10.1 Credibility**

Credibility refers to the extent to which a research account is believable. To demonstrate credibility, it is necessary to show that the study was conducted in such a way as to ascertain that subjects are properly selected, and data rigorously described. The researcher ensured credibility by preparing important information in the form of notes from subjects. These notes were thoroughly studied to establish their importance to the research study. The data were analysed once again and given back to the role players to make sure that the information that was recorded was correct. This procedure is also known as member checking: each contributor should be provided with a transcript in order to confirm its validity and to protect stability in the research (Rambaree 2007).

#### **1.10.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the probability of the research being applied to a similar situation and delivering similar results (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:258). The researcher did not force or guide the participants regarding what to say. To permit transferability, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendation of providing thick description of the phenomenon was followed and the researcher provides a robust and detailed account of all

experiences during data collection. If a new research environment resembles the current environment, and the results should be replicable.

#### **1.10.3 Confirmability**

Truthful reporting and constant monitoring ensured that the findings and interpretation of the study cannot be regarded as figments of the researcher's imagination but are clearly derived from the data (du Plooy- Cilliers et al., 2014:259).

#### **1.10.4 Dependability**

This term refers to the quality of the process of integration that takes place between the data collection methods, data analysis, and the theory generated from the data (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:259).

To further ensure trustworthiness and credibility in the findings, the researcher focused on Ortlipp's (2008) concept of reflexivity. Because of the researcher's personal interest and passion for the topic, she needed to conduct a review on her prejudice and any pre-conceived ideas. This information was written down before and after each interview in a reflective journal.

### **1.11 *LIMITATION OF THE STUDY***

The restriction of the study was that lecturers who participated were only from Orbit TVET College campuses, due to the following reasons:

- The time factor, as the researcher operated on a time frame and as a result was not in the position to visit other TVET colleges in the country.
- Finances to move from one TVET college to another might be insufficient.

The researcher is conscious of the possibility that the outcomes of this research cannot be generalised to other TVET colleges in the country.

### **1.12 *ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS***

Researchers who study human behaviour should make sure that they follow a strict

ethical code. Babbie (2007:62) cautions that anyone who engages in social systematic research should of necessity be conscious of the common consent shared by researchers regarding what is moral and appropriate conduct.

Complete consensus ought to be attained from the participants prior to the research. The researcher should not harm the research participants in any way whatsoever. She should prioritise the confidentiality and anonymity of the study participants and safeguard a sufficient degree of privacy of the investigation records. Every aspect of the study should be conducted with integrity and openness. She should develop a strong relationship with research participants to allow accurate, valid and reliable information to be gathered.

The researcher considered the following in respect of the participants in the study:

- The significance of the acknowledgement of the contributions made by participants,
- Protection of participants, and
- The confidentiality of all information about and from participants.

#### **1.12.1 Informed consent**

Participants were informed about the research through letters. In obtaining informed consent, all possible advantages and disadvantages were explained to the participants. The researcher also explained to the participants that they should not expect any remuneration for taking part in the study. They were permitted to decline taking part at any point of the data collection, and if they chose to do so, they would not face any penalties.

Bless (2002: 143) asserted that the researcher ought to clarify to participants what the study entails and what is needed of them in terms of participating. Information contained in the letters was clarified verbally to participants and they were also given an opportunity to ask questions. Thereafter the participants' signatures along with that of the researcher formed part of the evidence that they indeed understood what had been explained to them.

Confidentiality entails defending the secrecy (personalities, names, particular roles)



of the respondents and holding in confidence what they share (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The participants' information, data collected, and any further personal particulars should be held anonymous. This was the case in the current study.

#### **1.12.2 Avoidance of harm**

The researcher's duty is to defend contributors from possible suffering. If the participant no longer wishes to be part of the investigation, he or she should be allowed to withdraw at any time.

#### **1.12.3 Privacy and confidentiality**

The name of the college and participants ought to be confidential. The researcher should advise participants that their names would not be used and give them the assurance that the information provided would be confidential.

### ***1.13 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS USED IN THE STUDY***

#### **1.13.1 Inclusion**

The process by which students, especially those encountering barriers to learning and development, gain admittance to and participate in the general school system is known as "Inclusion" (Mahlo 2011:15). Inclusion acknowledges the basic right to education which will provide all students with the chance to attain their full potential. Inclusion is about providing entrance, creating chances for as well as accepting different needs of all students, and offering continual assistance when necessary.

#### **1.13.2 Inclusive education**

According to Das, Das and Kattumuri (2013:40), numerous definitions of inclusive education have been advanced throughout the world. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1994:6), the directing belief that underlies comprehensive teaching is that the highest priority should be given to accepting, speaking about and sustaining various requirements of all students, and enrolling them in regular school.

### **1.13.3 Support for learners**

Students experiencing barriers to education need sustained support to enable their admission to as well as involvement in the usual classroom (Walton 2006:7). According to Ainscow (2000:103), educators have the main obligation of assisting learners to study alongside their typically developing friends. An inclusive school allows education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the essentials of all learners experiencing barriers to education for them to accomplish their educational right (Matlala, 2015).

Das *et al.* (2013:103) emphasised that present-day vocational faculties should be as imaginative and accessible as a sitting room where educators can employ teamwork for solving problems. Such sources and resources, however, are unavailable for educators who want to manage variety in the schoolroom (Das *et al.*, 2013: VI).

### **1.13.4. Barriers to learning**

Problems that students experience and that need to be addressed for effective learning to take place are known as barriers to education. Such barriers can be intrinsic or be found in an organisation and within the bigger society. Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:363) noted that students experiencing barriers are to be found in almost all classrooms. Though some students can attain specified results in a specific era, some will need additional time. Engelbrecht and Green (2007) indicated that educational difficulties should not be regarded as something existing within the student but equally, if not more, in the education structure. Students are frequently challenged by factors relating to education practice, as well as the variety of proficiencies in their schoolroom, in the family, in society and in public.

### **1.13.5 Language**

Language is defined as a multidimensional and an open scheme (Landsberg et al., 2011:126) through which human beings communicate their thoughts to others.

### **1.13.6 Assessment**

In this study, assessment means a process of identifying, gathering, and interpreting information about students, particularly regarding the combination of intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning (Borman & Dowling 2010:37-38).

#### **1.13.7 Support**

Support refers to various strategies used to assist schools to enable effective teaching and learning to take place. It includes provision of a suitable learning environment as well as educators who minimise barriers to learning (DoE, 2009:7).

#### **1.13.8 Attitudes**

Prejudiced and negative attitudes in the public about dissimilarities in ethnic group, class, gender/sexuality, ethnicity, incapacity as well as beliefs turn into barriers when directed towards students in the education system. An inadequate comprehension of the needs of marginalized children, often based on deep rooted cultural principles, defiance to transform, and ignorance, are possibly the greatest barriers to Inclusive Education at all stages, from legislators to home-grown representatives. Plans for attitudinal changes are often centred on incidents unrelated to the people who are targeted. The requirement is to enlarge understanding of how people are influenced in a certain background, and so develop ways and processes to make change a permanent process.

If lecturers and residents could be persuaded to alter their unhealthy mind sets regarding dissimilarities between people in general, and to be flexible enough to transform, then most of the problems in the realm of education might be diminished and there might be an increased possibility that the process of inclusion could be effective.

#### **1.13.9 Inadequate and inappropriate provision of support services**

Inapplicable and insufficient provision of student and personnel support services in an educational organisation does not benefit the growth of students. It is not only the students who are in dire need of support. According to Brandon (2006:44), teaching tends to be disorderly, clumsy, inadequate, imbalanced and regularly incorrect when the needs of teachers at all stages are not being

effectively met.

#### **1.13.10 Lack of parental recognition and participation**

Vigorous participation of parents in the education and studying process is vital to operative learning as well as growth. On the other part, poor parent participation, lack of accountability, absence of sources to enable participation, and non-existence of parent encouragement all serve to exacerbate insufficient parent involvement in the teaching system.

Since the introduction of Inclusive Education, parents have been experiencing the return of their children to mainstream schools as a problem, since most parents do not approve of this policy. Engelbrecht & Green (2001:174) agree that most parents do not believe that mainstream educators are equipped to teach their children. They believe instead that the special school educators are better skilled for the work. Parents will not be interested in supporting educators if they are not encouraged to participate in the education of their children. Current policies and legislation in South Africa seem to support the participation of parents in the education of their children.

#### **1.14 CONCLUSION**

The chapter has provided a summary of the study. The problem statement, research questions, methodology and research paradigm, and key concepts were discussed.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

A literature review can be explained as a straightforward and perceptive representation of the applicable study work conducted in the area of research (Sekaran, 2003).

This chapter reviews information linked to addressing semantic barriers to learning at TVET Colleges. Attested guidelines in assisting students experiencing language barriers to education and the theoretic clashes in assisting students against the background of comprehensive education were reviewed as well. In this study language barriers to learning have been conceptualized to include reading, spelling, and writing.

White Paper 6 on IE (DoE 2001:11) puts forward the perspective that inclusive education is concerned with increasing the involvement of students in the teaching and learning process, and with putting in place applicable plans to address barriers to learning. Inclusive Education, as defined in Education White Paper 6 (2001:6), means acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children need support.

The ideology of inclusion was expounded in an important document, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs: Access and Equality, Salamanca, Spain, held on 7-10 June 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). The research in hand will focus on assistance for educators tackling the challenge of students undergoing difficulties in the classroom, investigating the kind of support for educators as well as investigating challenges and strategies educators are experiencing when addressing barriers to learning.

Engelbrecht and Green (2001:40) indicated that the institution of a comprehensive education strategy has brought about that educators frequently feel engulfed, depressed and incapable, their perception being that decisions have been imposed upon them without their being consulted. Eloff, Engelbrecht, Pettipher and Swart (2002:185) stressed that trials with which lecturers are confronted include lack of

educational support and teacher support, inadequate resources, and absence of a meaningful framework as well as helpful devices.

In addition to these concerns, Engelbrecht and Green (2001:19) warned that inadequately trained educators and the non-existence of an optimistic teaching and education background do not produce a warm atmosphere for students. Small wonder, then, that students who face barriers to learning have been struggling to reach their potential.

Poor support and lack of resources to enrich education and teaching can have a bad influence in the comprehensive classroom. According to Engelbrecht, Green and Naicker (2010:158), individuals working in collaboration can achieve more than persons operating separately. For this reason, a group of educators operating together, having diverse areas of proficiency, knowledge, and experience, can cause a difference in an institution and build an optimistic and favourable setting for education.

Dyson (2001, in Landsberg, Kruger & Swart, 2010) and Ainscow (2009, in Landsberg, Kruger & Swart, 2010) agree that inclusive education is built on principles of constructing a representative population where everybody is equal and receives quality education, and schools are in the position to adapt to all types of learning needs. In general, IE is about emerging communities and a schooling system that is inclusive of all individuals regardless of their needs.

Inclusive education stimulates a shift from looking at an individual student as the one with a problem that needs to be fixed. Inclusive education stimulates the implementation of a societal model where the student's difficulties are not only inspected within the student, but also with a view to how the broader society where the student is located can be involved in overcoming the obstacles to learning (Landsberg et. al, 2010).

Numerous studies prove that language might be a barrier to education for the majority of individuals, particularly in emerging countries, and that on numerous occasions a language barrier may delay the educational progress of skilful students who are using a second language (Baloyi, 2002:3; Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2002:301)

The prevalent inadequacy in the use of second language ought to advocate to planners, interpreters, as well as evaluators of education policies that support services are of vital importance if effective provision of education is the goal (Mgqamashu, 2007:200). The Department of Education should safeguard fairness of learning opportunity for students with any educational need. The Department is obligated to supply teaching support to students who have educational needs. The Department has undertaken to boost as well as build up the administration and running of exceptional teaching throughout the country (Mahlo, 2011: 46-51).

As stated by Loebenstein (2005:62): “The delivery and conception of support services in South Africa followed the same general ideological pathway as in other countries proceeding from superstitious beliefs, neglect and limited support; to the development of legislation which considers that the provision of support is best effected within mainstream learning environments ...The central feature which distinguishes South Africa from other countries in terms of past provision of support for learner needs is the extent to which its particular socio-political and economic history and locus of power contributed to the general lack of educational provision and massive social deprivation of the majority of its people neglect and limited student support “. The new Constitution of South Africa provided the game-changing policy which is relevant to this topic and informs the research.

#### **2.1.1. The Constitution of South Africa**

The South African Constitution, Act 106 of 1996 (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996) upholds the rights of students to education. It affirms that all learners should have the benefit of equivalent privileges and protection of human dignity and that every child has a right to basic education (Sections 29(1) and 10). The National Department of Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (Department of Education, 2001) calls for a system in which skilled educators exercise a child-centred education perspective in well-appointed schoolrooms, as well as proficient ongoing evaluation of teaching and learning.

#### **2.2 SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) established an English Across the

Curriculum (EAC) strategy (DoE, ND) to benefit students facing difficulties with learning content subjects through a language that is not their own. The EAC strategy is appropriate for the NC (V) programmes because the entry level is a Grade 9 pass.

The purpose of EAC was to boost the teaching of English as a subject as well as English as LoLT, and was grounded on the assumption that each lecturer remains a language lecturer, and that the fundamental linguistic skills like reading and viewing, listening and speaking, writing and presenting should be imparted in content subjects. Model lessons were established to indicate how language influences learning and to ground fundamental concepts (e.g. the prefix 'tri' means 'three'). The main objective was that students should be able to fully take part in society, measured as entry to education and the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life.

At the National Science & Technology Forum (NSTF) Discussion Forum held at Emperor's Palace Convention Centre in Kempton Park on 3 - 4 October 2017, Mrs Wendy Chauke, of the University of Limpopo, indicated that language is essentially a human activity. She added that communication should strive to minimise barriers and ensure that meaning is not lost. Language is the external and internal characterization of thought and is influenced by the ability of the user. "What are the problems in the classroom environment and what are the advantages of obtaining a new language?" she asked. Language is an important part of the learning process. She further outlined linguistic acquisition as the process whereby humans obtain the ability to perceive and understand spoken and written language, as well as to produce and utilise words and narratives to facilitate communication.

Language acquisition relates both to the native language or mother tongue and other languages. In order to become multilingual, a speaker needs the opportunity to acquire languages other than the home language or mother tongue. Language is an essential issue in the education and learning environment. It is a vital foundation and the leading instrument of knowledge distribution of each lesson to students. Language is a feature of being human; it features in all societal situations and encourages collaboration and socialism. According to Ochs and Schieffelin (1986), language is an essential resource in the teaching and learning situation which helps individuals to comprehend the way societal facts and philosophies are handed down from one generation to the next.



The DoE (2002: 5) acknowledges that people's knowledge and identity are shaped through language. Language conveys beliefs and interconnects our perception. The importance of language in teaching and the part language plays in education and learning cannot be underrated. Language inadequacy can hamper academic progression and disrupt the teaching and learning process.

## **2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Machaba (2013: 22) defined theoretical context as a lens which researchers employ to observe the world, and which reveals the perspective embraced by the researcher. According to Machaba (2013:22), it assists in creating expectations concerning the research and how it is linked to the world.

## **2.4 RELEVANT THEORIES RELATED TO LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

This study was informed by an asset-based approach, which emphasises the need to redress the balance between meeting needs and nurturing the strengths and resources of people and communities - a view appropriate to the topic of how educators and learners construct teaching and learning, and based on Vygotsky's (1978:36) social constructivist theory and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The manner in which the classroom environment (activities, interactions and relationships) is experienced by learners and how the educators view the classroom environment (resource materials, organisation, design, teaching methodology and the number of learners in a class) in relation to the employment of Inclusive Education is conceived within the social constructivist's paradigm. The classroom is regarded as the social background for learning, where learners gain knowledge and skills through collaboration with capable others (peers and teachers).

### **2.4.1 Socio-cultural approach to cognitive development**

According to Vygotsky's theory of social-cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978: 58), social collaboration plays an important role in the development of cognition (Kirschner, Sweller, Kirschner, & Zambrano, 2018). Like Piaget ((Gray and MacBlain, 2015)), Vygotsky believes that children are inquisitive and actively involved in their own learning, and in the discovery and expansion of new understanding. However, Vygotsky placed more emphasis on social input to the process of development, whereas Piaget highlights

self-initiated finding (Gray and MacBlain, 2015). According to Vygotsky (1978:68), much important learning takes place through social collaboration with a proficient educator, who provides verbal instruction for the learner. Vygotsky referred to this as co-operative or collaborative dialogue.

The researcher infers from this that effective teaching should always lead to active learning. Therefore, educators should seek out appropriate teaching and learning ways to include all learners and to encourage inclusive classrooms (Pangrazi & Beighle, 2019). Vygotsky (1978) emphasised that cognitive development in children is promoted by their collaboration with other people around them, for example, peers, parents, and teachers at school.

#### **2.4.2 Vygotsky's mediation and language**

The notions that learners are active in building their knowledge and that cognitive development cannot be detached from its social background; that all higher functions begin as social relationships; and that language plays an essential role in mental development (Richerson et al., 2016:39), are clearly spelled out in Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where interaction is essential to the process of development. This theory emphasises the significance of communication with knowledgeable others in the process of meaning construction. Mediation is the process through which the learner takes ownership of the cognitive tools that make the construction of knowledge possible (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010:54). skills. The learner can only build his/her knowledge through the help of parents, educators, or other adults or older children. Development takes place within a social background in which social relationships occur. In this process new skills and higher mental functioning are acquired.

Constructivists believe that the learner's social background and the mediation he/she experiences shape the form and usefulness of his/her cognitive approaches (Bruner, 1998:67). Constructivists also believe that knowledge is not inactively received by human beings but is actively built and developed at higher levels individually. This is accomplished through engagement in experiences, activities, and deliberations which challenge learners to make meaning of their social and physical surroundings. Moreover, knowledge is created and re-created between people as they bring to bear their personal experiences and information, originated from other sources, on solving a specific problem (Wells, 2000:53). Understanding is thus built during the process of

people working together to solve the problems that arise in the course of shared activities. This concept suggests that a learner comes to school, not as a clean slate, but as having knowledge attained from home and community, to be used to relate to the school setting and the learning actions within the classroom.

According to the Vygotskian perspective (Vygotsky, 1986: 124), dialogue is essential to the process of knowledge construction. Language is the vital instrument that drives meaningful interactions within an activity and creates deeper understanding of the phenomenon with which the learner is involved. Vygotsky (1986: 125) saw language as a key mediator of knowledge for persons, while it also operates as a conceptual organizer, a primary medium through which thinking takes place.

The basis of Inclusive Education as explained by White Paper 6 (South Africa, 2001:10) is that teamwork, support, and active participation of learners in the learning process is the key to Inclusive Education. Thus, to attain this objective, education requires the use of teaching methodologies propelled by theories that encourage teamwork and active participation. The constructivist approach provides the background for understanding the role of learners, educators, parents and significant others as mediators in the process of learning.

The learner in this case is actively involved in meaning construction with the help of the educators, peers and parents. The educator plans activities and supports the learning process for the learner to progress and develop to his or her full potential. The role of parents in this process is to provide support for the learner by giving love, respect, and recognition, which form the foundation for the development of self-confidence and self-esteem needed in the learning process within the classroom. Moreover, support as emphasized by the DoE (South Africa, 2001:9) is interconnected to mediation, which Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1986: 170) sees as the intervention the learner receives from more knowledgeable others.

Social constructivists propose that reality is constructed through human activity (Kukla, 2000:79). In this sense, knowledge is also a human product, and learning be a social process, taking place in a background that will allow social connections and communication to lead to the construction of new meanings and further development. The classroom in this case is the social setting for learning, and an environment that permits learners to develop together, to mediate and draw knowledge from each other.

Therefore, new skills are developed as learners interrelate and communicate with each other in the learning process.

The researcher assumes that educators need to encourage collaboration in the classroom, and they should be mediators. The study focuses on finding ways to include all learners, to cater for all their learning needs and styles and to allow them to participate actively in the classroom. The constructivist theory is applicable to the study as it places emphasis on learners as active participants in the process of learning, as they interact with each other and capable others to construct new understanding of their reality. This theory permits the researcher to explore educators' involvement in teaching and learning and the methods they use, with a view to finding out how the classroom environment assists them in implementing Inclusive Education.

#### **2.4.3The Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development as the difference between the current level of cognitive development and the potential level of cognitive development (Doolittle, 1995). He maintains that students can reach their learning goal by completing problem solving tasks with their teacher or engaging with more competent peers. Piaget, however, believes that children advance to more sophisticated knowledge and thought processes when they are faced with events that do not fit into or match their existing schemes or formats (Littlefield & Cook, 2005).

Vygotsky believed that a student would not be able to reach the same level of learning by working alone that he or she would do with the help of capable others, such as peers or educators (Barker, Quennerstedt, and Annerstedt, 2015: 20(4), pp.409-426).

Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978:120) provides the framework for active inclusive teaching and learning in the classroom. Vygotsky believed that good learning occurs in the child's zone of proximal development (educational technology.net). In other words, the learner will be moving from the known to the unknown with the help of the capable others in his or her environment. From this, Rowlands (2006:89) concludes that teaching happens most effectively when support is offered at those points in the ZPD where the learner needs help, and there is a distinction between what the learners have understood and where they are in the process of learning.

According to Vygotsky (1986: 135), there are four stages through which learners must progress to reach their optimal development.

**Stage one** is where the learner has the capability to perform the task but has no understanding of how to do it. The learner needs help from more knowledgeable others to mould behaviour and provide direct instruction, until such time that he can perform a task on his/her own. Support rendered to the learner at this stage is vital for his or her further development (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999:86).

In the **second stage** the learner performs the task without assistance from others, even though performance has not fully developed. The learner, at this stage, talks to himself or herself to direct his or her own actions, in order to remind him or herself of what to do in the task (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999:87).

The **third stage** is where performance is developed and a task carried out smoothly and in an integrated way, which implies that performance has been internalized (Andriamamonjy, Saelens and Klein, 2018:91,166-181). Support from capable others is no longer needed, as learning at this stage is self-directed. The learner is able to try and finish the tasks alone without mediation from the capable others. For example, if given a research project, he or she possesses the skills to carry on the task and knows all the required steps and procedures to conduct it, and is able to complete it without help from others (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999:132).

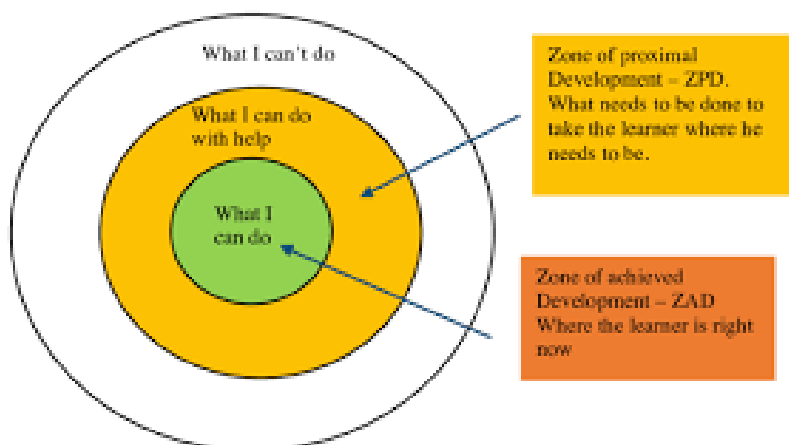
The **fourth stage** occurs when the learner may have fully developed a particular task, but suddenly discovers that he or she can no longer perform it automatically, due to intrinsic factors such as stress or illness, and any extrinsic factors, such as the learning environment not being conducive, or the necessary equipment or learning materials lacking. The learner at this stage might need some assistance.

It is worthwhile noting how educators and other capable others in the classroom, such as peers, intervene in this situation. Knowledge of the ZPD will assist the researcher in understanding learners' experiences as they progress through this path, and also in exploring the role of educators and peers in this process.

The implementation of Inclusive Education will be explored through learner interaction with peers, teachers and the classroom environment as they progress through the ZPD.

The ZPD thus provides a framework for effective inclusive teaching and learning in the classroom and assists in understanding learners' experiences as they progress along the path (Munro, 2018:145-156). It is also useful in exploring the role of the educators and peers in the learning process. The implementation of Inclusive Education will therefore

be explored through the interaction with educators, peers and the classroom environment as they progress through the ZDP.



**Figure 1. Diagrammatical representation of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development**

The Zone of Proximal Development is always changing as the students expands and gains knowledge, so scaffolding instruction must constantly be individualized to address the changing ZPD of each student (Al Mamun, Lawrie and Wright, 2020).

#### **2.4.4 Scaffolding**

In education, scaffolding refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process (Farias, Hastie & Mesquita, 2018).

With scaffolding, the learner is working with experts or more capable others (educators or parents) on challenging task that he or she could not solve independently (Slavin, 2019). The experts model applicable problem solving behaviours, present new methods to address the problem, and encourage the learner to use her or his developing skills by assuming responsibility for some parts of the task (Vygotsky, 1978:79). As the learner develops the skills required, he or she should receive less assistance and solve more of the problems independently. Simultaneously, the learner will face yet more challenging tasks on which he or she will continue to receive support. Effective teaching-learning transactions thus establish successive zones of proximal development (Bhakat, 2020:11.4).

Wilkinson and Silliman (2001:99) identified two types of scaffold, the first being *supportive scaffolding*, contemporary instructional applications of which directly mirror Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD. This approach is reconcilable with current recommendations for learner-centred instruction. Value learning, as a search for understanding, provides chances for responsive feedback, and views the educational process as occurring within a community of learners (Gay, 2018). The second type of scaffolding is *directive scaffolding*, which is the most predominant and formal organizational unit of classroom interaction. According to Wilkinson and Silliman (2001:87), the directive scaffold parallels the direct instruction or skills-emphasis model of instruction. The researcher assumes that both types of scaffolding are essential in promoting the inclusion of all learners and providing support to address their learning needs.

Lack of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies has been identified as a reason for academic problems experienced by children with learning difficulties (Wade, 2000:13). Wade (2000:13) went on to describe cognitive strategies as task-specific, i.e., used to attain a certain goal. Meta-cognitive strategies are used to monitor and assess cognitive strategies to ensure that the goal has been reached, but these strategies, when used as a form of instruction, can build up the performance of learners with learning difficulties and can bring their achievement on academic tasks up to the same level as that of other learners who do not have learning difficulties (Wade, 2000:15).

Educators need to use these strategies as a means of scaffolding learners to reach a state where their academic performance is on same level as that of their peers. In the case of Inclusive Education, the educators have to step into each learner's ZPD and support them until they reach a state where they can perform without assistance (Esteban-Guitart, 2018.:21(4), 384). This calls for educators to understand fully each learner's potential, even that of learners experiencing barriers to education and those with special education needs. To this end, the DoE (South Africa, 2005d) provided suggestions regarding learning styles that are helpful in nature, so that educators can enter into a learner's ZPD and support him or her to the appropriate level of potential development (Mattar, 2018:21(2).

## **2.5 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHALLENGES IN TEACHING STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

### **2.5.1 College factors**

Factors within the College can contribute to the challenges learners face when they want to learn.

#### **2.5.1.1 Curriculum**

The curriculum has been regarded as one of the most significant factors that can be an obstacle to learning in the Republic's private as well as public education institutes (Mpya, 2007), and as Msimango (2002:128) stressed: "[It is] at the heart of the education and framing system. It reflects the values and principles of our democratic society. It may thus be seen as the engine that should drive the values and principles espoused by our society". An inflexible curriculum cannot accommodate all learners in the classroom and could even lead to learning breakdown (Mpya, 2007). The Department of Education (DoE, 2001) cautions that barriers to learning can arise from different aspects of the curriculum. The following possibilities are listed:

- The content (i.e. what is taught).
- The language or medium of instruction.
- How the classroom or lecture is organised and managed.
- The methods and processes used in teaching
- The pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum
- The learning materials and equipment that is used.
- How learning is assessed.

The most effective way to address barriers to learning that arising from the curriculum is to ensure that the process of learning and teaching is flexible enough to accommodate all the various learning needs and styles of the learners in the specific learning environment. The curriculum must be accessible to all learners (DoE, 2001).

The DoE (2005d: 9) also stressed that adaptation to education, coaching and evaluation styles, as well as adequate resources, should enable student participation in education activities. Syllabus adjustment can enhance a variety of learning methods, processes and conditions (DoE, 2005d: 74). The syllabus should be structured in such a way that all students can access it (UNESCO, 2001:90), for as Hanco (1999:75) wrote, its adjustment permits educators to discover the strengths of students experiencing barriers to learning and enables the educators to create a



situation in which students can demonstrate growth and development.

The EWP 6 (DoE, 2001:8) advocates that the application of Comprehensive Teaching be supported by changes in attitudes, behaviours, education methods, curricula, and the environment, so that variety could be acknowledged, and the needs of all students met. To this end, the classroom environment needs to be structured to include every student, in the sense that all activities have to respect the disparities in students, whether due to age, gender, or nationality, and assist them in developing their capabilities and realising their potential. Educational activities need to be age-suitable, not gender or nationality-based.

### **2.5.2 Personal factors**

The attitude of various members of the community, including the educators, can also constitute a barrier to learning. A restricted understanding of the needs of certain learners, frequently grounded on profound rooted traditional beliefs, or resulting from the struggle to adjust to new expectations as well as inexperience, is possibly the biggest obstacle to attaining Inclusive Education at all stages and for all participants.

#### **2.5.2.1 Attitude**

Discriminatory attitudes resulting from prejudice against people on the basis of race, class, gender, culture, disability, religion, ability, sexual preference and other characteristics manifest themselves as barriers to learning when such attitudes are directed towards learners in the education system.

Undesirable and discriminatory attitudes in the community resulting from prejudice against people based on race, class, gender, cultural values, disability and religion create barriers to learning when learners become the target of these attitudes (DoE, 2005d). Since policies for attitudinal change are normally grounded on knowledge unfamiliar to these communities, there is a real need to facilitate greater understanding of how individuals are affected in specific circumstances.

The DoE (2002:136) acknowledges that previously students used to be classified as 'slow learners with special educational needs', resulting in exclusion or positioning in a particular learning environment, not because they belonged there but due to the requirements and standards that were set by the apartheid education system. The argument is put forward that if educators and citizens could change their negative

attitudes towards differences in society, and adjusted to change, then most of the barriers to learning may be overcome, and the process of inclusion would stand a better chance of being successful.

### **2.5.3 Lecturer-related factors that influence challenges**

Lecturer-related factors that can cause barriers to learning include lack of training. Lecturers face challenges in assisting students in the classroom because they have not been given proper training on how to deal with students experiencing language barriers in the classroom.

#### **2.5.3.1. Inadequate and inappropriate provision of support services**

Lack of support services in schools and colleges does not promote the development of students. The key issue relates to the provision of human resources to both educationalists and support staff. Ahuja (2007:7) explained that lack of awareness, service delivery that is fragmented and unsuitable to the situation in which it takes place, and uncertainty in allocating provisions, all develop from insufficient and disorganised development of human resources. According to Brandon (2006:44), guidance has typically been inclined to be disjointed, awkward, insufficient, incapable and often unsuitable, and teaching requirements of staff at all stages were not being effectively met.

#### **2.6.1 Intervention**

Vigorous participation of parents in the education and learning procedure is vital to actual knowledge and growth. On the other hand, negative attitudes towards parental participation, no recognition of their responsibility, nonexistence of resources to accelerate participation and absence of development programmes for parents contribute to insufficient parental involvement in the education process. With the introduction of Inclusive Education parents have been challenged to take their children to mainstream schools, which most of them do not consider appropriate.

## ***2.7 RESEARCH FROM SWEDEN ON SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS***

Several factors relating to support for students who experience barriers to learning emerge from the Swedish literature on this topic (Medved, Franco, Gao & Yang, 2013: 8-9).

### **2.7.1 An overview of support for students with language barriers to learning**

English is one of the core subjects in Swedish schools. Students are expected to have a specific level of proficiency in English. Medved, Franco, Gao and Yang (2013: 8-9) maintain that students experience difficulties in comprehending English due to insufficient vocabulary and the educators' pace of delivery. The factors associated with difficulty in developing English ability are listening skill and verbal interaction, reading comprehension, vocabulary and writing. For the purpose of the current discussion, language-connected support opportunities were grouped into the following categories: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

### **2.7.2 Listening support**

Educators should not speak too fast when teaching students experiencing language barriers. Educators should decrease the pace when speaking to give students an opportunity to observe and absorb language. Key terminologies should be repeated often and be written on the board. Teaching aids should be prepared, which can assist students to follow what has been discussed. This gives students a handle to grasp if they lose the thread of the discussion. Assignments should be written on the board or educators can distribute handouts. This is essential because students with problems in listening may not comprehend oral assignments. Educators must remember that asking if everyone understood the subject may not be sufficient, since it is embarrassing for students to ask in public if they do not understand.

In addition to what has been suggested, specialists also suggest that educators reduce the use of unfamiliar words and complex sentences as well as avoid the use of slang or informal words. Whenever an educator employs novel words, it is advisable to provide alternative words/expressions or to offer explanations. In that way the educator can assist students to comprehend English and improve their lexicon.

### **2.7.3 Speaking support**

Educators should reconsider oral discussions and examinations. Students sometimes prepare answers in advance. However, this is not always practical, since it is often difficult to foresee the direction a classroom discussion will take, and prepared

responses may be inappropriate. Educators should offer an encouraging environment to stimulate classroom discussions. They should inspire students to express themselves in the schoolroom and try to avoid humiliation as much as possible. They should provide students with enough time to reflect. In some cases, students feel more comfortable to speak up after enough thinking. Permitting enough time to think can assist students to participate in classroom conversation. In addition, if students are permitted to function in small groups, they feel free to speak much more simply than in a large group.

#### **2.7.4 Reading support**

Educators should give students much more time to read English materials such as newspapers, magazines and storybooks. Students should be given additional time for reading. Explanation of terminology should be freely available to allow for better comprehension of reading material.

#### **2.7.5 Writing problems**

Educators should help students to review text, which will benefit them with regard to content as well as language skill. They should encourage peer communication because students develop their writing as well as consultation abilities in group work. When students assess each other, extra benefits are incurred, such as an escalated sense of communal progress, as well as combined accountability for education.

### ***2.8 An overview of support for students with language barriers to learning in Zambia***

Jere-Folotiya et al. (2014: 15-16) indicated that literacy (reading as well as writing) is an essential skill for living a positive and prosperous life. It is a highly valued talent for achieving individual, societal, and financial welfare. People access their democratic privileges through reading as well as learning about the world around them. With no ability to read, people would not be able to retrieve essential data from books. Reading is essential for operative communication. For young students, interpretation of written information is vital since it improves their language skills. Through reading, students are exposed to new vocabularies, as well as spelling and connotations. It provides inspiration and grows imagination when they

read different kinds of stories and create stories of their own.

Jere-Folotiya et al. (2014: 16) confirm that educators should have the know-how to help students with various capabilities and needs in the course of teaching reading, since educators' knowledge about effective teaching instruction makes the greatest difference in whether or not each student will have an opportunity to learn to read successfully.

An active educator of language should understand how students learn spoken language and how they learn to read and write. The relationship between the development of verbal language and achievement in reading and writing is significant. Educators should be skilled in efficient classroom management, for example, the capability to plan, direct, and oversee the classroom situation so that appropriate learning can take place. Educators should be able to plan teaching resources and know what to anticipate of students in order to create a constructive classroom environment for linguistic teaching.

Evaluation of progress in language development plays an essential part since it assists educators in modifying their reading instruction to start from the baseline for all students, thus making their education effective and relevant. Evaluation includes examinations, class tasks, and reading exercises as well as schoolwork. Students learn to read from educators.

## **2.9 An overview of support for students with language barriers to learning in South Africa**

English is the main language of communication, academia, business and technology in South Africa (Nel & Theron, 2008: 204-208). Many parents believe that English is the best choice of Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) for their children. As a result, many English Second Language (ESL) students encounter barriers to learning because of imperfect English ability. Educators teaching English often lack training, information, resources and time to support students with imperfect English expertise in accomplishing their full potential.

Educators should use stories as a powerful means for language enhancement in all

programmes. Stories offer well-structured language that is easy to understand and give students the confidence to use new words. Stories offer experience in a variety of language usage and so promote language growth. Stories encourage the development of literacy (reading, speaking and writing) skills. Stories are an exciting way of learning and reinforce culture and interaction.

The basics that are analytical for the effective use of stories to strengthen language are: stories must be applicable to the learners' living conditions, interests, and culture.

Since many classrooms in South Africa are multilingual and diverse, the story has to allow the South African background, existing morals and political strain as well as cultural relationship and cultural diversity in mind. Stories need to appeal students' attention. In order to do so, the story must be an appealing experience. Creativity, technical competency and a good plot with a sensational peak reveal this (Nel & Theron, 2008: 204-208).

Optimal language should be developed through:

- Opportunities for active classroom language interaction.
- Lecturers reading stories in a collaborative method and moving away from the inactive faculty-story format of lecturers reading and learners paying attention.
- Collaborative usage of stories that includes a conversation about the characters before and after the reading, prediction of story events, explanation of unknown terminology, a discussion and comparison of individual interpretations regarding the story, employment of puppets and other inventive resources as well as a re-enactment of the story.

Lecturers must inspire students and facilitate their independence by avoiding excessive expectations. They should not concentrate on mistakes but on attainments, on articulacy rather than accuracy, offer logical input and use key terminology items, applicable gestures, context, repetition and rephrasing. Terminology and ideas, prior information, language learning, perception and learning activities are all involved in the development of academic language expertise (Nel & Theron, 2008: 206-208).

## **2.10 SUMMARY**

The current chapter examined literature concerning assistance for students experiencing semantic barriers to learning. The discussion concentrated on the philosophies, educational theories and practical aspects relating to barriers that exclude any sector of the community from teaching and learning.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### ***3.1 INTRODUCTION***

The current chapter discusses the methodology that was employed in the investigation and presents the appropriateness of a qualitative research approach. The chapter explains the investigation strategy, and the processes of collecting information as well as analysing it. The chapter provides a detailed description of data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study and it concludes by explaining the importance of the study from a wide perspective. The chapter ends with an examination of the issues of credibility and dependability. The research is directed at the problem statement that language is a barrier to learning in TVET Colleges.

### ***3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM***

This research study was positioned within an interpretive paradigm, where the participation of individuals is the main source for understanding the phenomenon under investigation. The ontological viewpoint of an interpretive researcher is to gather different experiences and views from the participants about the phenomenon under study (Rodriguez & Smith, 2018). By means of the interpretive model the researcher attempted to create a sense of the significant issues in the participants' world by speaking to the participants (Alase, A., 2017). Therefore, this approach allowed the researcher to interpret the perceptions, views, and opinions of the participants in their personal circumstances and customary setting (Alase, A., 2017: 9-19). It allowed the researcher to understand, draw rational expectations and examine the participants from a personal viewpoint (DePoy & Gitlin, 2019).

In this study the researcher expected several views, and clarified the opinions, perceptions and perspectives of the participants with respect to students experiencing language barriers in the TVET Colleges in Bojanala District (Matthes, Knoll & Von Sikorski, 2018: 3-33).



The merit of a research paradigm is that it keeps the researcher focused on the objective of the research study and the source of the understanding to be gained (Lindsay-Dennis, L., 2015:506-520). The researcher believed that several views and understandings of the topic under study could be gathered (Kivunja, C. and Kuyini, A.B., 2017:26-41).

Wahyuni (2012) specified that the realism of the experience should be controlled by the perception, knowledge and viewpoint of the participant. When conducting this study, the researcher's objective was to determine the emotional state and views of the participants by talking to them through semi-structured interviews (Brown & Danaher, 2019:76-90).

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

The researcher used a qualitative approach to gather data.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative research approach**

Merriam (2009: 13) understood the qualitative study method as an umbrella sheltering an array of data collection and analysis techniques, as well as theoretical and epistemological frameworks for making sense of, or interpreting, phenomena. Qualitative research involves collecting and interpreting text, images, or discourse. This includes a qualitative study of the practices of educators in the classroom. According to Neuman (2000:126), qualitative researchers emphasise collecting actual data from participants in a research setting. The current investigation also examines related components that could have an influence on lecturers when attending to the different requirements of students. In a qualitative study, the investigator presents communal, extensive queries to participants as well as permitting them to express their individual viewpoints and perceptions.

A qualitative approach was utilised since it records information directly from participants, permits the researcher to instantly interrelate with participants, and allows the researcher to acquire additional data as well as knowledge regarding the research topic. Therefore, the researcher had the opportunity to interact directly with participants in order to obtain data and an increased understanding concerning the research material.

It has been suggested that the qualitative study method attempts to understand and

clarify human nature. It includes studying human behaviour within its own condition. The qualitative researcher studies phenomena in their natural setting by attempting to make sense of or interpret facts in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011: 286). Collection of data in qualitative approach is done through interviews, non-partaking inspection, case studies, and records. In qualitative study, information is personal and idiographic because it focuses on the individual and emphasises what is uniquely personal. The idiographic approach does not set out to formulate laws or generalise results to others. What it reflects as truth in a specific context depends on the participants' practices.

### **3.3.2 Advantages of qualitative research approach**

Barbour (2014: 15) described the benefits of the qualitative study method as follows:

- It permits the researcher to obtain methods by concentrating on the background of people's day-to-day lives.
- It assists the researcher to comprehend seemingly illogical behaviours.
- It is specifically appropriate to studying context.
- It excels at highlighting processes, whether organizational changes or individual decision-making.

The qualitative research method was considered appropriate for this study since it allowed the researcher to enter the participants' life world and studied their life understandings (de Vos et al., 2011: 64). Lecturers could specify their viewpoints concerning encouragement for learners with language barriers to learning in TVET colleges. This research sought to document a comprehensive picture of encouragement for learners with language barriers to learning, within the context of those who are providing it.

Research design is the plan that the researcher uses to conduct research (Johnson & Christensen, 2008: 197). McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 22) stated that the research design explains how the researcher proposes to obtain answers to the research question and how the plan is set into action. In the current case, the researcher considered a period for the research, the target population, sampling procedures, the research methods, data collection methods, analysis approaches

and methods. The importance of drawing up a research plan (design) is that it assists the researcher in taking a decision on the way in which the basic research problem will be resolved. Some of the aspects to be considered in the current plan were available time, financial estimates, amenities, availability of data, possible methods of analysis and the researcher's own development in terms of research skills (Attia, M. and Edge, J., 2017:33-45). The research design determined how data was gathered and examined and ensured that the data enabled the researcher to answer the research questions.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

According to Mouton (2005:56), research methodology focuses on the processes and the kind of procedures to be used by the researcher. The point of departure is the specific tasks (data collection) at hand. Methodology also focuses on the individual steps in the research process and the most "objective" procedures to be employed.

#### **3.4.1 Research site**

The interpretive study was performed on three TVET campuses in the Bojanala District in the North West Province. The TVET College chosen for this research was an urban-rural College consisting of three campuses situated in different areas of Bojanala District.

These three campuses were purposefully selected from other TVET colleges in the North West. All three campuses were then asked to take part in the research. The aim in involving all three campuses in the research was to offer an impartial indication of the views of lecturers regarding students experiencing language barrier in the TVET College.

#### **3.4.2 Sampling and population**

Sampling is the process employed to select a section of the society the research aims to study (Maree 2010:79). Best and Kahn (2006:248) stated that sampling is used to choose certain individuals, settings, or events on the grounds that they can deliver the necessary data. Springer (2010:100) pointed out that sampling refers to methods that permit one to use a subset of a population as a foundation for making inferences about the large group.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were considered to have knowledge and experience regarding the topic of the study (Antony, Cheng, Brooks, Paller, & Norman, 2018:155, 216-230).

A sample of six lecturers (two per campus) was selected from a population of lecturers on all three campuses. The participants included both males and females.

The researcher employed purposive sampling to acquire the type of information necessary for this research. It allowed the researcher to choose participants that can provide valuable, rich information and explanations of their experience on the topic under review (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Lecturers having three years of experience and above were selected to participate in the study as they have more experience of students experiencing language barriers than lecturers who are newly appointed.

The researcher requested permission from the campus manager to contact those lecturers and to notify them about the research. The consent letters were given to the lecturers and later returned to the researcher. Individual appointments were made for semi-structured interviews after college hours at the preferred venues of the participants. The researcher named the three selected campuses Campus A, Campus B, and Campus C. Their actual names were withheld for ethical reasons.

#### **3.4.3 Data collection technique**

Qualitative data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with participants. The interviews were conducted individually with each participant at their campus.

According to de Vos et al. (2011: 351), the commonly employed consultation method in qualitative exploration is the semi-structured interview. In semi-structured consultation, questions are phrased to allow individual responses. The respondents are not provided with a selection of options from which to select an answer.

During interviews, each interview was audio tape recorded in full and notes were taken. The interview schedule was regarded as very important, as essential questions were specified in the schedule. The use of audio tape and note taking assisted the researcher to not forget vital information or questions during the interview. The interview schedule consisted of various open-ended questions by which the researcher aimed to gain more detailed information.

#### **3.4.4 Advantages of interviews**

The advantages of interviews were clarified by Drew, Hardman and Hosp (2008: 190) as follows:

- Interviews are both flexible and specific to contribute the data needed.
- Direct interaction throughout interviews permits simple checking of accuracy and applicability.
- Interviews have a high response percentage due to flexibility in the presentation.
- Through interviews, the personal standpoint of the participant is offered.
- Interviews generate specific in-depth information.
- Through interviews, valuable understandings can be constructed from the generated data.
- Through interviews, credible dialogue is possible, and follow-up questions to explain questions and responses are normally encouraged.

#### **3.4.5 Limitations of interviews**

- An interview is time consuming, often requiring the researcher to travel to the participants' place for data collection. Recording and interpreting the collected data also takes considerable time.
- In an interview, an interviewer needs great skill and know-how, deep attentiveness, solid interactive contact skills, note capturing skills, and sustained objectivity while promoting collaboration (Drew, Hardman & Hosp, and 2008:190).

### **3.5. RECORDING OF DATA**

The researcher ensured that the information achieved from the interviews could be electronically verified. Transcripts of the recordings were valuable in checking and verifying data obtained during the interviews.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

A great amount of data was obtained through qualitative data collection. This data needed to be arranged into themes and subthemes (Kumar, 2011). In this instance a content analysis approach was used to make sense of the rich information. Content analysis entailed gaining an understanding of the information by coding, classifying,

writing and presenting the information into associated themes (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:138)

The researcher created a method to make sense of the information (Creswell, 2009:43). The descriptive, observational notes and the transcription of the digital recordings of the interview were reviewed and analysed. The data were studied through a critical lens because the researcher seeks to understand why students are experiencing language barriers in TVET Colleges. Creswell (2009:218) recommends that researchers analyse the information in such a way as to highlight the codes by which the researcher wants to organise the knowledge. The preliminary processing of information included transcribing the audio recordings, cleaning the information by deleting all the data that led to identifying the participants and the places where the information was collected, and employing codes to distinguish the participants and the institutions included in the research (Wahyuni, 2012).

The researcher used the following processes and guidelines to examine and combine the information:

- Ensure that the topic is rooted in the research questions.
- Arrange data into feasible components.
- Arrange information in suitable groups to make sense of the data.
- Arrange information through previously determined procedure together with an interview guide and study questions

The research questions and the objectives of the study were used as guidelines to analyse the data gained from the study (Wahyuni, 2012). In addition, the researcher analysed the data meticulously by examining the participants' answers to each question.

### **3.7 Trustworthiness**

The measures of trustworthiness for this research are as follows (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:259).

### **3.7.1 Credibility**

Credibility refers to the correctness with which the researcher has interpreted the data that was provided by the participants (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:258). In order to ensure credibility, the researcher spent long periods of time with the participants in order to understand participants better and gain insight into their lives.

### **3.7.2 Transferability**

Transferability means that the findings can be applied to a similar situation and deliver similar results (du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014:258). The researcher took measures to ensure that the findings of the study can be applied to another context or situation.

### **3.7.3 Conformability**

The researcher can affirm that the data collected supports the findings and interpretation of the study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014:259).

### **3.7.4 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the quality of the process of integration that takes place between the data collection methods, data analysis and the theory generated from the data (du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014:259). Dependability is important to trustworthiness because it establishes the research study's findings as consistent and repeatable. The researcher ensured that all the research process steps were followed and will keep all records of the research process. These records will be made available in adherence to departmental, institutional, and legal requirements.

## **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The following procedures were followed in conducting the study in order to adhere to ethical principles:

- A permission letter for research was delivered to the Campus Manager and the lecturers about the study and their participation in it.

- All participants received notifications and guarantees in connection with the privacy of the consultations and the permission to pull out at any point.
- Participants were notified that conversations would be recorded and retained confidentially until the research was concluded.
- Participants were requested to give written consent to be observed and interviewed, and for their input to be analysed. Participants were assured that the results would be shared with them after the successful completion of the study.
- Participants were also kept up to date with the right to pull out from the research at any moment.

### **3.10. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Chapter 3 defined the research approach as well as the strategy applied in the current research. The outcomes of the research will direct discussions regarding lecturers' support in addressing difficulties in TVET colleges. Findings will be applied as a guideline concerning suitable assistance for lecturers.



## CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this research study was to investigate the measure and nature of support for a specified population of students who experience language barriers to learning. Systematic analysis of the qualitative data permitted the researcher to offer a model for aiding students experiencing semantic barriers. Chapter 4 offers and decodes the key outcomes and conclusions based on the data obtained.

### 4.2 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

The profile of the six participants was derived from semi-structured interviews in which they provided the researcher with about themselves. For privacy purposes, participants were labelled A, B, C, D, E and F and in the transcripts their names were replaced with pseudonyms for confidentiality purposes. All six lecturers from the three TVET college campuses involved in the study are currently teaching English NC (V) level 2.

Profile information collected from the six participants appears in Table 4. 1.

**Table 4.1: Participating lecturers' biographical data**

<b>Participants – Label and pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Number of students in class</b>
A (Gabriel)	M	38	N6 Diploma in Financial Management	11 yrs	38
B (Melody)	F	50	Degree in Psychology	9 yrs	18
C (Precious)	F	45	BEd Hons in Education	4 yrs	27
D (Molly)	F	51	HED & BEd in Inclusive Education	27 yrs	27
E (Brian)	M	51	BEd Education	29 yrs	15
F (Sharon)	F	54	SPTD & BEd In Management	26 yrs	45

## 4.2 PRESENTATION OF DATA COLLECTED

Information obtained during the interviews revolves around the following research questions:

- How do lecturers identify students experiencing language barriers?
- How are the identified students supported?
- How could the support provided to TVET college students experiencing semantic barriers to learning be improved?

The information was collected by means of qualitative interviews which were conducted with six English NC (V) level 2 lecturers on the three campuses. The interviews presented rich information, and the following topics relating to language-based barriers to learning were identified:

- Socio-economic factors leading to barriers to learning
- College-based factors
- Personal factors
- Lecturer-related factors influencing challenges
- Strategies available to support students experiencing language barriers

The outcomes are presented and deliberated in the following sections. The exact words of participants as recorded are provided in some cases to prove authenticity. The topics and sub-headings that emerged from the data appear in Table 2.

**Table 4.2. Themes and sub-headings extracted from interview data**

THEMES	SUB-HEADINGS
1. Socio-economic factors leading to barriers to learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Family background</li><li>▪ Family matters</li></ul>
2. College-based factors leading to barriers to learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Curriculum</li><li>▪ Classroom organisation</li><li>▪ Resources</li></ul>
3. Personal factors leading to barriers to learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Language barrier</li><li>▪ Speech and language difficulties</li><li>▪ Boring classroom lessons</li></ul>
4. Lecturer-related factors leading to barriers to learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Training issues</li><li>▪ Lecturer's attitude</li></ul>
5. Strategies available to support students experiencing language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Intervention programme</li><li>▪ Active involvement of students</li><li>▪ Code switching</li></ul>

### **4.3 DATA PRESENTATION: INTRODUCTION**

Teaching and learning in South Africa comes from a past where there were many inequalities, but this should not prevent educators and learners alike in the current system from striving for excellence. There have been numerous improvements, as indicated in the previous chapter. The need to redress and repair the so-called “Bantu education” system which was characterised by inequality and segregation was the driving factor for the reform in education. The interviews with six lecturers in the study in hand reflected both the past and present frustrations as well as a will to do well.

The data presentation and discussion will follow the structure presented in Table 2. Not all the sub-headings will be elaborated on.

#### **4.3.1 Socio-economic factors**

Socio-economic factors affect the quality and availability of education as well as the ability of education to improve life circumstances. Family background and other family matters were acknowledged in the interviews as factors leading to barriers to learning, but they will not be discussed further as they are not considered to contribute substantially to the outcome of this research.

#### **4.3.2 College-based factors – challenges      within the college**

##### **- Classroom organisation**

The way in which the physical classroom environment is organised, can often make it difficult for learners to learn effectively. During the interviews it became clear that the teachers are aware of this potential barrier to learning and are striving to organise the placement of students effectively. Melody indicated that she sometimes grouped or paired her students to help one another in understanding the lessons better. Gabriel, Melody and Sharon shared the same sentiment when they indicated that they also used the students’ peers to explain what was taught in their mother tongue. This was being done in order to enhance better understanding.

##### **- Resources**

Resources are important tools in the learning and teaching of students as they encourage education and enable them to focus and understand better. The interviews provided evidence that the teachers are aware of this. Gabriel indicated that in addition to code-switching, he also used pictures so that students could

understand much better what was being said. The following is the quotation from Gabriel supporting the statement:

*“Lecturers gave examples using pictures and dictionaries to make students understand the lesson”*

All participants, except Melody, indicated that they did not have any resources that enable effective teaching to students undergoing language barriers to learning. In such cases, there was no way that students could overcome language barriers.

Precious emphasised that it was a problem not having resources, especially when students were supposed to conduct research. Melody had a different response, indicating that she had resources in her class, posters that she found in her class when she started teaching.

To add on to what other participants had said, Molly said:

*“I don’t have any resources except a textbook which is usually written in a language that is difficult for level 2 students to understand. I am also not aware of any other resources that can be utilized to assist students who are experiencing difficulty due to experiencing language barriers”.*

#### **4.3.3 Personal factors**

##### **- Language barriers**

The SA constitution (1996, section 29) emphasises every child’s birth right to teaching in one of the recognised home languages. The SA language policy places emphasis on the assisted acquisition of the two or more languages in a multi-lingual culture. The strategy encourages learners to become proficient in their FAL while sustaining their mother tongue (Department of Education, 2002).

Participants were asked to define *language barrier* and they responded as follows:

All participants indicated that a language barrier is anything or any form of interference that prevents effective communication, leading to misinterpretation and incorrect feedback.

All participants except Sharon specified that students were unable to comprehend English words, which affected their ability to participate meaningfully in the education and teaching process. As specified, instructional language was one of the difficulties participants experienced.

It was specified by all participants during their interviews that students were entitled to interconnect and study in a second or additional language. The medium of instruction in the TVET colleges is English, which initiates a barrier to learning because it is not the home language of the students or the teachers. The participants also indicated that students communicated mostly in their mother tongue and were unable to express themselves in English.

Language difficulties restrict or complicate interchange during formal instructional activities. This statement is proved by Gabriel when he said:

*“It’s difficult to teach students experiencing language barriers because their question paper is set in English, so we are forced as lecturers to explain the question and terminology used in the question paper in the language that they understand better, which is their mother tongue and also use dictionaries to simplify the question.”*

#### **4.3.4 Lecturer-related factors**

The attitudes as well as the practices of teachers and lecturers have a significant effect on students’ learning. Participants were asked the following question: How do you react towards teaching students undergoing semantic barriers?

Participants, except Molly, indicated that they were positive towards teaching students experiencing language barriers. Each and every participant motivated their positive attitude differently. Their motivations were as follows:

Gabriel said:

*“I am positive in terms of the approach I use; I also try by all means not to use terminologies that are difficult because at some point you use them, and they find it difficult to comprehend what you are saying. I always try to be as simple as possible, giving those examples to overcome language barriers.”*

Melody said:

*“I am positive because I know that some are affected by the environment where they are coming from.”*

Precious said:

*“I speak slowly and avoid using difficult words that they sometimes cannot*

*understand. I apply patience to the student so that they can understand, be free, have the ability to relax and also participate in class."*

Brian said:

*"I have a positive attitude because I would like to help and see them improve academically but the challenge is that I am not formally trained to handle such students."*

Sharon said:

*"As lecturer with different knowledge of teaching methods, one is obliged to assist such students by developing teams with their peers so that they become free and ultimately be able to communicate."*

Contrary to what the previous participants said, Molly said:

*"My attitude is one of frustration; I actually don't know how to address the problem. I am able to see the impact in the results the students are producing. It is very frustrating to see that a student is eager and willing to develop but is prevented due to this language barrier. It makes it difficult for them to be accommodated in the world of work. It becomes de-motivating for them if they keep on trying but cannot improve their marks or quality of work due to the fact that they do not understand the word/terminology or questions."*

According to the responses from the interviews, five of the six participants were positive in helping students experiencing language barriers. The participants were trying by all available means to take the education of the college students to a higher level, despite the challenges they were facing.

### **- Training issues**

Participants were asked about the training they received on giving support to students experiencing language barriers in the TVET colleges. All participants indicated that they never attended any training in relation to barriers to learning.

Melody emphasised that the only training they attended was moderator and assessor courses. In assessor courses, they were trained to assess students during their presentation of speeches and also when they are doing listening comprehensions.

The comments highlighted above indicated that TVET college lecturers were not given staff developmental support. Lecturers were experiencing challenges in dealing with students experiencing language barriers, and the main problem is they were not trained in how to overcome that challenge.

### **- Identification of students with language barriers**

In the literature review, it was specified that early identification could help alleviate this kind of a barrier. Assessment techniques could help to identify students experiencing language barriers in the classroom.

Gabriel, Melody and Brian indicated that they are able to identify students experiencing language barriers by the way they answer questions when lecturers communicate with them. Brian explained that students misinterpreted questions due to language barriers e.g. mother tongue interference, poor vocabulary, and poor reading skills. He further indicated that students have an average ability to speak but cannot read what they can say, they cannot spell, and they have very limited vocabulary. Precious indicated that she noticed students experiencing language barriers by the inability to participate in class. They are usually loners or very reserved in class. Molly and Sharon shared the same sentiment where they indicated that through formal assessment, they can immediately pick up if the student understood the questions or not.

Molly further explained that there was no formal procedure in place. Her response was as follows:

*"I can only determine if students are experiencing a problem during formal assessments, the students has a poor understanding of the language by not being able to interpret the case study/background information given, by not understanding the question and also by not being able to give the correct answer even though the work/learning content was covered in class."*

However, the responses above indicated that lecturers were not using the same method to identify students experiencing language barriers. Moreover, they were not even trained on barriers to learning. The bottom line is that the language barrier issue created a challenge between students and lecturers. Students were unable to interpret questions and reading and/or spelling were also a challenge to them.

#### **4.4 Strategies/methods to support students**

The question concerning which methods lecturers used to support students

experiencing language barriers throughout their academic preparation received attention in the consultation sessions. The participants specified several methods they were utilising. Nevertheless, most of the participants indicated that they still needed to be supported, especially by parents, their senior lecturers and HoDs.

### **- Intervention programme**

The importance of assistance cannot be overemphasised. The EWP6 (DoE, 2001:17) indicated that inclusive education was all about providing support to each student, all educationalists and the entire system.

The EPW6 (DoE, 2001:16) specified that all youngsters have the right to study as well as to be supported, and also stated that all students vary regarding their learning requirements. The responses of participants regarding the strategies they are using to support students experiencing language barriers were as follows:

Gabriel and Melody indicated that they used their mother tongue to explain for better understanding. Gabriel further explained that at some point he used pictures to help students in understanding some topics. Precious indicated that she normally asks students to remain behind and then explains where they do not understand. She also asks them to speak to other students with better understanding.

In addition to what the other participants have indicated, Molly said:

*"I apply methodologies that I acquired through many years of teaching, although limited in addressing the enormous problem. I have re-written into a workbook, which implies that students can use, read and see the words in the workbook as well as the accompanying textbook, which usually uses terminology that is difficult for the students to understand. I encourage students to read the word when I pronounce it, so they hear and see the word, then I explain the word and ask them to repeat the word". This however is not a structured formal process that is followed, but only a methodological practice incorporated into my classes."*

Brian had a different strategy to the others. He indicated that he gives students one on one attention and remedial sessions, and he also discusses the challenges they have with them. Sharon indicated that she encourages reading aloud, reading newspapers and magazines, and teamwork where the more fluent student will be able to help the less confident one. In that way there is so much interaction between students.



When participants were asked if their support strategies were helpful to students, Molly indicated that even though it was very slow it was still worth it. Gabriel, Melody and Molly indicated that the strategy they were using helps a lot.

EWP6 (DoE, 2001:10) summarised the kind of support students need and provides advice about the educational support scheme required. The main reservations the participants expressed were that lecturers used different strategies to help students and that their methods of support were being picked at random, signifying that they were not sure and still needed clarity on how to support students who experience language difficulties. Lecturers were using their own teaching experience and the strategies which they thought were best in their classrooms.

### **- Active involvement of students**

The participants indicated that another strategy they used to support their students was to involve them actively in the education procedure to facilitate comprehension. Melody as well as Sharon recounted that when they engaged their students in the teaching and learning set-up, knowledge was retained.

Melody disclosed that:

*“They understand much better because they are free to interact with questions to one another unlike if it’s me working with them.”*

Sharon also indicated that she uses teamwork where the more fluent students will be able to help the less advanced ones.

The responses showed that peer assistance helped a great deal in situations where students experience language barriers. Students were able to interact with one another, and they understood one another, unlike when they interacted with their lecturers. The implementation of mentoring and the Peer Academic Programme (PAP) with emphasis on addressing language barriers and monitoring the progress by reporting to SSS officers might also assist students experiencing language barriers.

### **- Parental support**

All participants indicated that most of the time students struggle to complete their homework. Melody further explained that most students are affected by their background because their parents are illiterate.

It was previously indicated in this study that lecturers still believe in the full support of parents as prerequisite for effective teaching to take place. Parents understand their children much better and can provide information that can assist educators in helping to support their children. However, information accumulated throughout the interviews exposed the non-participation of most parents in the education of their children. Parents seemed to be unwilling to take full responsibility in the education of their children.

### **- Support from the Student Support Services**

Participants were asked about the support given by the SSS in their colleges and they responded as follows.

Gabriel and Brian shared the same sentiments where they indicated that students are identified and sent to Student Support by their HoD's but they further explained that they are not receiving any feedback as to what exactly happened there. They also do not see any improvement in those students' progress in class. Gabriel also emphasized that the college does not have a supporting structure that is effective. Gabriel furthermore indicated that there is not much communication between lecturers and Student Support Services. Molly and Sharon indicated that Student Support Services use Peer Mentors to help students who struggle with language barriers.

Molly also said:

*"Although it is generally accepted as a factor for students to not being able to improve their results, it is not being addressed in a formal way. We do have an Academic Student Support centre, and students who did very poorly in the first assessment have been reported to ASS (Academic Student Support Services). There is a Peer Mentoring programme that is applied to assist students whose academic performance is poor; however, I do not think that this specific language barrier is being attended to. I would think that all level 2 students should be enrolled into a Programme which will focus on enhancing their understanding of English".*

Precious had a different response, indicating that since she referred the matter to her seniors, she believes that they are the ones liaising with Student Support Officers, but it seems to be a slow and frustrating process.

According to participants' comments, students were not benefiting from the SSS. The SSS officers left the problem of language barrier in the hands of peer mentors; hence they were unable to give feedback to lecturers.

Communication is the most effective tool to help and to resolve the challenges encountered, but according to Gabriel, it was clear that there was a lack of communication on the campus.

#### **- Support from the Senior Lecturer**

Gabriel, Precious, Molly, and Brian shared the same sentiments where they indicated that they follow protocol by sending emails with the names of students experiencing language barriers to their senior lecturers and as a result, senior lectures forward those names to the Student Support Services.

Sharon had a different view. She said:

*"We always communicate as lecturers concerning the improvement of students experiencing language barrier and also encourage them to work with their classmates to enhance them in expressing themselves much better".*

Contrary to these statements, Melody indicated that she hasn't asked anybody for help as she is managing her students on her own.

#### **4.5 The support provided to students by lecturers**

Precious, Molly, Brian, and Sharon had different views on the progress of students they supported.

Precious said:

*"At least on one student there has been a progress, so I still have hope because speaking to them one on one has yielded some positive results, a level of trust is developing between me and the student".*

Molly said:

*"Unfortunately, I do not have a form of measurement in this regard and cannot say whether any student has responded to the support provide."*

Brian indicated that the response has been minimal since most have barriers originated in the Foundation phase and should have been addressed at that stage.

Sharon said:

*“A lot of improvement is evident as they have shown a lot of interest in the language and this overcome their fears in terms of expressing themselves.”*

According to the above comments, there was a slight improvement on the side of some students as a result of the support given.

#### **4.6 THE SUPPORT LECTURERS NEED TO BETTER SUPPORT THEIR STUDENTS**

The following question was directed to lecturers:

What do they need to better support their students in this regard? Participants had different responses and they are as follows.

Gabriel said:

*“We need proper training, we need to be trained on how to assist students who have barriers in language, I think maybe after training, that’s whereby we can stand on our own in classes and assist our students so that they can overcome barriers.”*

Melody said:

*“If they can assist students during free periods with spelling and word order, maybe it can help.”*

Precious said:

*“If I can be given a bit of counselling knowledge, have more understanding or knowledge to deal with students with language barriers, I think I will be able to deal with these students.”*

Molly said:

*“I definitely need training. I need to be able to be determining if a student has a language barrier, the level of severity thereof and how to assist the student. In many cases, I feel that I am doing an injustice to students. I may be trying to help, but due to the severity of the problem, it may be that I am simply frustrating the students even more because I may be making the problem even worse than it is.”*

Brian said:

*“I need formal training, tools and materials for supporting such students. Students Support Services should work with me and let me know what they are doing and what part should play to compliment what they are doing so that we work together in helping the student.”*

Sharon had a different view to the question, and she said:

*“If we can be given more of literature, reading materials or prescribed books*

*would definitely help improve on the students' confidence in dealing with the language, communication will drastically improve and students will be able to express themselves."*

The responses presented by Gabriel, Precious, Molly, and Brian, clearly show that TVET College lecturers need training to better support their students experiencing language barriers. TVET college lecturers also need to be trained on how to identify and assist students by adapting teaching methodologies.

#### **4.7.1 How could the support provided to TVET college students experiencing language barriers to learning be enhanced?**

Different responses were also given by participants as to how student support could be enhanced.

Gabriel said:

*"Registering students for Pre-Learning Program as it offers English as a bridging course might be the solution."*

Melody and Precious shared the same sentiments when *they recommend the use of specialized software in the Student Support offering support to students for English, maybe that can help better the performance of our students in English.*

Molly, Brian and Sharon has the same viewpoint indicating *that the support to students may be enhanced by implementing mentoring and peer academic programmes with the emphasis on addressing particular language barriers and monitoring the progress of such by reporting and observation.*

#### **4.7 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

Information-rich data was gathered to meet the research objective of determining how lecturers recognise and give support to students experiencing semantic barriers in the classroom. The data analysis exposed themes that enabled the researcher to get answers to the research question which was indicated at the beginning of the research.

The main themes that emerged were: Education-related issues, challenges within the college, lecturer-related factors influencing challenges and, lastly, strategies

available to support students experiencing language barriers. Different insights derived from these themes permitted the researcher to achieve the set objectives.

#### **4.8 EDUCATION-RELATED MATTERS**

It was revealed from the information gathered that the semantic barrier was one of the big trials lecturers were facing in their classrooms. Most of the participants had students, who could not understand English, which is the instructional language used in the college classrooms. This verifies what Webb (in Adler & Reed 2002:73) disclosed in his research: having English as LoLT may be disrupting the growth of South African education.

The study of Setati, Adler, Reed and Bapoo (2002) exposed that most written resources utilised in education and learning in South African's institutes were published in English, a language that is mother tongue to few educators and students in the country. However, the constitution (section 29) clearly recognises eleven official languages and states that each child had the right to be taught in any of those endorsed languages.

Most of the participants reported that they used mother tongue to code switch, which is not actually supported by the South African language policy even though code switching and other forms of trans-languaging have often been strongly recommended as ways to help pupils understand concepts (Kretzer & Kaschula, 2019).

#### **4.9 STRATEGIES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS EXPERIENCING LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

The study's findings indicated that all participants provided interventions for students experiencing language barriers. Some of the intervention processes revealed by participants were code switching, using peer leaders, and other strategies to make the lesson material accessible for the students. Participants' means of intervention seemed to cover a fairly broad spectrum except for only one participant who specified that she invariably instructed students experiencing language barriers to remain behind at the end of the period. EWP6 (DoE, 2001:16) accepted that all students differ and have various educational needs. It follows that educators should have a variety

of strategies in their arsenal.

#### **4.10 PARENTAL SUPPORT**

The research data disclosed that the complete lack of assistance from parents frustrates participants. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:200) noted that when parents see the importance of teachers and support them, their eagerness to help remove barriers to learning is restored, and children's achievement endures for life when their relatives as well as society join forces to help them.

Luxomo and Motala (2012:148) discovered that parents identify educators having full responsibility for their children's achievement; they are not willing to participate in the education process. Participants in this research paper indicated that the students were not taking responsibility for their assignments, specifically those who experience language difficulties. A significant contributing factor is that parents were mostly illiterate and not able to help them.

#### **4.11 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Data analysis discussed in the current chapter exposed several thought-provoking issues relating to the challenges lecturers encounter when teaching students who experience language difficulties. Information was collected through qualitative research involving semi-structured interviews with six English lecturers at a TVET College.

Even though it was revealed that lecturers were using different strategies to support students experiencing language barriers, there were various aspects obstructing their progress, causing disturbances as well as frustrations since they were not accomplishing the results they expected. Lecturers all reported similar perceptions of the difficulties they faced, such as lack of resources, non-participation of parents, the language barrier, and lack of support from the SSS, as well as the issue of not being trained.

The challenges in teaching students experiencing language barriers in the TVET College and how lecturers identified and supported students experiencing language barriers were fully discussed in this chapter. It became clear that the challenges lecturers are undergoing will need to be attended to. The last chapter concentrates

on recommendations, evaluation of the study, and final conclusions.



## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The former chapter presented analysed records of semi-structured interviews as well as the results derived from the analysis. The current chapter focuses on summarising the research findings and providing final conclusions as well as recommendations.

The research paper utilised a qualitative approach to examine how lecturers recognise and support students experiencing language barriers in the specified TVET colleges. The method of using qualitative interviews enabled the researcher to answer the research question:

How do lecturers identify students experiencing language barriers?

The sub- questions were:

- How are the identified students supported?
- What support can be given to lecturers dealing with language barriers to education in TVET colleges?

### **5.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS IN BRIEF**

Identifying and meeting the learning needs of students experiencing language barriers in the TVET colleges constituted the main topic of the study. Lecturers have the responsibility of ensuring that each and every student receives quality education. An inclusive education strategy dictates that educators welcome each student in the teaching environment and provide for their individual educational needs.

The findings revealed that lecturers were experiencing challenges in identifying and supporting the educational needs of these students. The main purpose of the report is

- To explore how lecturers identify students who experience language barriers.
- To establish how these students are supported once identified.
- To identify the kind of assistance available for lecturers in dealing with language barriers in the classroom

The first chapter gave an overview of the study and placed it in context. Chapter 2 presented the review of literature. The research method used for the study was discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 presented the analysis of data.

The analysis of records started with the profiles of participants (see Table 4.1). Profiles of the participants indicated that on the grounds of their qualifications they met the requirements for teaching in TVET colleges. Table 4.1 also indicated the teaching experience of lecturers.

The findings identified various factors that affect lecturers when teaching students experiencing language barriers. There is a clear indication that lecturers were experiencing similar difficulties which were exercising a negative effect on their teaching and learning situations. All these factors hindered productive efforts by lecturers, which resulted in frustration and loss of hope. The factors ranged from socio-economic factors, college factors, personal factors, and strategies available for lecturers to support students experiencing language barriers, to lecturer-related issues.

The results suggested that lecturers were indeed making efforts to report language barriers experienced by students in the classroom environment. Lecturers also used various strategies to support students experiencing language difficulties.

Diverse thought-provoking ideas were expressed during the interviews regarding factors that prevented the effective academic practice of lecturers. Factors included lack of resources and appropriate learning materials, family backgrounds of students, language barriers, socio-economic problems, classroom organisation, the attitude of students towards their lectures, the attitude of lecturers towards students experiencing language barriers, non-existence of parental support, lack of support from the SSS, and lecturers' lack of training.

Structured plans for lecturers to support students experiencing language barriers were not available in the TVET College. All lecturers testified during the interviews that they used strategies that they thought were working for them. However, all the lecturers indicated that they were still struggling to overcome language barriers. Challenges experienced by lecturers in addressing language barriers in the TVET

colleges were deliberated at length. Lecturers all expressed similar concerns, as reflected in the information collected during the interviews. The interviews enabled lecturers to communicate the difficulties they face when teaching students experiencing language barriers.

### **5.3 SYNOPSIS OF THE OUTCOMES**

The recommendations in this chapter are based on the communal factors mentioned by lecturers in Chapter 4.

#### **5.3.1 Personal factors**

Attitude can be a contributing factor towards any language barrier. A restricted understanding of the needs of people with any form of disability, frequently grounded on deeply rooted traditional beliefs, inability to adapt to new paradigms as well as inexperience, is possibly the greatest obstacle to Inclusive Education at all stages and in all settings.

The DoE (South Africa, 2002:136) stated that previously students used to be classified as 'slow learners with special educational needs', resulting in exclusion or positioning in a particular learning environment, not because they belonged there but due to the requirements and standards that were set by the apartheid education system.

The researcher argued that if educators and citizens could change their negative attitudes towards diversity in society, and adjusted to change, then most of the barriers to learning could be overcome, and the process of inclusion would stand a better chance of being successful. Language differences constitute a very prevalent form of diversity.

Lack of interest in learning a language, more especially for learners who are using their mother tongue most of the time, can also contribute negatively towards language acquisition and use.

##### **5.3.1.1 Language barrier**

The language barrier is a major problem faced by students from disadvantaged families who have difficulty in communicating in English. While the SA constitution (1996, section 29) emphasised the right of every child to be taught in

one of the official languages, the language policy in South Africa in fact requires learners to be competent in their FAL whilst maintaining their mother tongue (DoE, 2002).

The study indicated that students were not able to comprehend the English language, and this affected the learning and teaching process. Lecturers also indicated that although English is the language of communication used in their colleges, students were experiencing it as a barrier because they communicated mostly in their mother tongue as they were unable to express themselves in English.

It was also indicated that there was no language policy in the colleges, which becomes a significant challenge to lecturers teaching English.

#### **5.3.1.2 Recommendations**

- DHET should draft a language policy and guidelines for TVET colleges because there was no uniformity and consistency in how they addressed language barriers.
- Student support computer laboratories should have a programme that offers support for students learning English.
- Lecturers should include dictation and/or spelling periods in their timetable. This would enable students to improve their spelling.
- The College should have a special and informal reading programme that would develop the love of reading.
- The college should register students for PLP (the Pre-Vocational Learning Programme) as it offered English as a bridging course.
- There must be formally structured one-on-one lessons with students experiencing language barriers.

#### **5.3.2 College-based factors**

College-based challenges can also be caused by lecturers not being given support by the Management of the College in terms of educational resources.

##### **5.3.2.1 Lack of resources**

Most lecturers indicated that they did not have resources to use in the classroom.

They mentioned that they only used textbooks to teach students. They indicated that they were frustrated because it was difficult for them to work and accommodate students without teaching and learning materials.

#### **5.3.2.2 Recommendations**

- The researcher recommends that DHET make education the first priority by ensuring that lecturers are supplied with learning and teaching resources/materials for effective teaching to take place.
- It is the responsibility of the college management to bring it to the attention of the appropriate agency if they were experiencing any shortage of learning materials for the smooth running of the college.
- DHET should have a budget for training and lecturer development. This could lead to more effective teaching, which would be beneficial to both lecturers and students in class.

### **5.4 LECTURER-RELATED FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CHALLENGES**

Lecturer-related factors that exacerbate challenges related mostly to training. Lecturers were experiencing challenges in assisting students in the classroom because they are not given proper training on how to deal with students experiencing language barriers in the classroom.

#### **5.4.1 Training issue**

All six lecturers emphasised the issue of training for development purposes. Lecturers in the TVET colleges were not trained and as a result, student suffered. Lectures were encountering problems, but they had no knowledge of how to overcome them. Students were experiencing language barriers, but lecturers did not have a common method of identifying them. Each lecturer was using his or her own way of trying to identify students experiencing language barriers.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations**

- Lecturers should first be professionally trained in Inclusive Education before it can be put in place in the classroom environment. They need to understand what inclusion is about and how to implement it.
- The DHET should organise workshops or trainings for lecturers with the

aim of raising the TVET college education level. If lecturers are not trained, they are inclined to keep on doing the same thing inappropriately repeatedly without even realising it. The issue of overcoming language barriers will not be solved as long as lecturers are not supported by proper training.

## **5.5 STRATEGIES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS EXPERIENCING LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

EWP 6 (DoE 2001:11) proclaims that comprehensive teaching is about maximising the contribution of every learner in the programmes of education, as well as using relevant plans to address barriers to learning. IE, as defined in EWP 6 (2001:6), acknowledges that every child and youth can study and should be supported. Findings indicated that lecturers were not offered enough assistance regarding the problems they face in a comprehensive classroom. Landsberg (2006:17) admitted that assistance was the foundation of effective comprehensive teaching. The researcher's findings indicated that all lecturers provided interventions for students experiencing language barriers by using different strategies in the classroom environment.

Lecturer D revealed that there was no official policy implemented in TVET colleges and further indicated that she applied the methods that she had acquired through her teaching experience, even though these methods had limited success in addressing the enormous problem. Lecturers indicated that they were trying to ensure that students understand what is said in the classroom, but some admitted that with the strategies they are using it takes ages before the student can quite understand what the lesson was all about.

### **5.5.1 Recommendations**

- DHET ought to develop lecturers through training, for the benefit of both lecturers and students. If lecturers were trained, there would be consistency and uniformity among lecturers concerning the methods to use in supporting students experiencing language barriers.
- The issue of lack of training for lecturers is reflected in the disorganised way they apply methods in class to support students experiencing language barriers. If lecturers are not trained, they are

understandably going to use different methods to try assisting students with language problems in class. This is not conducive to collaboration or mutual support.

## **5.6 LACK OF SUPPORT**

All lecturers indicated that they lack support from the SSS and from parents as well.

### **5.6.1. Parental support**

During the interviews, lecturers expressed frustration with the lack of parental support for the learners in all aspects relating to their studies. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:200) indicated that if parents realised the importance of supporting teachers, they would be eager to help remove barriers to learning and thereby help their children to succeed in life. The EWP 6 (DoE, 2001: 16) specified that every child can learn and should be supported in their schoolwork. This was affirmed by lecturer C, who indicated that she had a student who exhibited reading and comprehension problems until her mother was invited to the college by the HoD. The mother was advised to help her child daily and the lecturer testified that the student's reading improved tremendously.

The study also revealed that lack of support from parents demotivates students, with the result that they do not bother to do their homework. Lecturers indicated that they need active participation of parents in their children's schoolwork in order to overcome language barriers.

### **5.6.2 Recommendations**

- The researcher recommends that the guidelines in the document "Practical Guidelines: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools" (DoE, ND (2)) be implemented so that parents become the main custodian of their children's education.
- The researcher further recommends that the TVET College introduce a policy that parents should be 100% active in whatever schoolwork is given to their children. Non-negotiable active participation of parents in their children's schoolwork should be clearly stated when they come to the college for registering them. If parents can be actively involved, the challenge of

language barriers will also be a minor issue.

- DHET should revisit the entry level requirements for TVET college students, which is grade 9. It is evident that students who passed grade 9 were still not able to express themselves well and struggled with reading and writing in English.
- The college should not only draft their own policy where rules are stipulated, including rules for participation of parents, there must also be a declaration form where parents should sign, indicating that they agree with the policy and undertake to contribute actively in their children's schoolwork since they know the background where their children are being raised.
- Parents should be strongly encouraged and motivated to attend parents' meetings because that is where they discuss challenges students are having in the classroom with their lecturers.
- Parents should promote the culture of reading by providing their children with reading materials such as newspapers, magazines and story books, and parents should be part of the reading process.

## **5.7 STUDENTS' ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT**

Piaget (Gray & MacBlain, 2015) believed that learners create their personal information. Learners do not just obtain it from their mentors; construction of knowledge is centred on their personal understandings (Ozola & Purvins, 2013:134). The Constructivist approach regards students as dynamic constructors of their own information whilst educators guide them in the progression (Duchesne, S. and McMaugh, A., 2018). The participants in the current research supported the belief that active participation of students in the education environment promotes knowledge acquisition and retention.

According to the findings, lecturers indicated that involving students actively in the learning process facilitates knowledge. Lecturers B and F also emphasised that when they engaged their students in teaching and learning scenarios, knowledge was retained. Lecturer F further indicated that she used teamwork, which helped students with language barriers considerably. She explained that students were able to interact with one another and understood one another, unlike when they interacted with their lecturers.



### **5.7.1 Recommendations**

- Lecturers should encourage students to be actively involved in teaching and learning and use activities that inspire active participation of students.
- Education should not always be formal. Lecturers can also teach students by playing language games that will be interesting and engage students actively.
- Students can also be grouped and compete against one another in a quiz, spelling bee, etc.

## **5.8 SUPPORT FOR LECTURERS**

How could the support provided to TVET college students experiencing language barriers be enhanced?

Lecturers were asked this question during the interviews. All lecturers indicated that they needed training that would better help them support such students.

The researcher recommends the following:

- The College should register students for a Pre-Vocational Learning Programme (PLP) as it offers English as a bridging course.
- The College should have a mechanism for early identification of students experiencing semantic barriers.
- Student Support computer laboratories should have a programme that offers support for English.
- The College should have a special and informal reading programme that will enhance the love of reading.
- There must be formally structured one-on-one lessons with students experiencing language barriers.
- It is recommended that colleges implement a mentoring and peer academic programme with emphasis on addressing a particular language barrier and monitor progress of such programme by reporting and observation.

### **5.8.1 Support of both students and lecturers from the Student Support Services**

The maintenance of SSS in colleges is a major challenge and lecturers and students are complaining. The study indicated that lectures were using different methods to identify students experiencing language barriers. Protocol for obtaining support was regularly followed, as lecturers email the names of students to their seniors where after the names are sent to SSS by the HoDs.

It is quite clear that SSS was not actively involved, as lecturers indicated that it was the norm at their colleges that no feedback was received. Lecturer A indicated that communication between SSS and lecturers was virtually non-existent. Even students whose names had been taken to the SSS reported that they were never called. Lecturer D expressed the opinion that the SSS on her campus was ineffective when it came to academic issues. They were only effective in sporting activities. Lecturer A indicated that Peer Academic Leaders were the ones playing a major role in assisting students with language barriers.

### **5.8.2 Recommendations**

- Communication at the college should be the stakeholders' first priority. Learning and teaching could never be effective if there was no proper communication.
- SSS officers should be re-trained as to how their offices should run.
- Students experiencing barriers to learning should as standard practice get help from the SSS.
- The SSS should engage professionals like speech therapists, social workers, and language specialists to assist in addressing any kind of barrier to learning.
- Peer academic leaders should take part in assisting students experiencing language barriers with the help of the SSS.

## **5.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

North West province has eight (8) TVET Colleges but the researcher conducted the study in three (3) campuses in the Bojanala District. The researcher is employed at one of those three campuses and is aware that the information gathered in those colleges cannot be generalised to all the TVET colleges in the province.

The fact that the researcher conducted the research where she is employed, might have influenced the way in which participants responded, because of being her colleagues.

A further limitation is that only one method was used to gather information, namely interviews. The focus group method was not used as the original intention was.

## **5.10 CONCLUSION**

There are three TVET colleges in the NW province, each with several campuses. The process of supporting students was investigated, as well as the challenge to lecturers dealing daily with students experiencing language barriers. Lecturers indicated that they supported students experiencing language barriers by using different strategies to comply with the policy of inclusive education.

The study revealed that lecturers in the TVET colleges are not supported in dealing with students experiencing language barriers and as a result they feel frustrated and demotivated. However, if lecturers could benefit from the support and training that could be provided by DHET, the number of students experiencing language barriers could decline. Teaching would also be more effective, and students would benefit. The non-existence of assistance in addressing language difficulties was discussed, and recommendations were made based on the findings. The findings revealed a communication gap among different stakeholders, namely DHET, college senior management, college SSS officers, and HoDs, which resulted in the lack of support as experienced by lecturers.

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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A: Unisa Acceptance letter

APPENDIX B: Interview questions for Lecturers

APPENDIX C: Request for permission to conduct research

APPENDIX D: Participant information sheet

APPENDIX E: Consent /Assent to participate in the study (return slip)

APPENDIX F: Confidentiality agreement

APPENDIX G: Ethical clearance

APPENDIX H: Government Gazette

APPENDIX I: Proof of editing

Reply all | Delete Junk |

## Postgraduate letter

M

mandd@unisa.ac.za

Thu 3/22/2018, 10:17 AM

SINNAH LENYAI

Reply all |

Inbox



1216 MDRES

LENYAI S MRS  
72 MAGALIESBERG ROAD  
ELANDSRAND  
0250

STUDENT NUMBER : 5078-947-3

ENQUIRIES NAME : M&D ADMIN SUPPORT  
ENQUIRIES TEL : 0124415702

DATE : 2018-03-22

Dear Student

I wish to inform you that your registration has been accepted for the current academic year. No printed material is available for the compulsory module in Research Methodology. Kindly activate your Unisa mylife account for future communication purposes and access to study material (<https://myunisa.ac.za/portal>)

Please check the information carefully and kindly inform the Master's and doctoral section at [mandd@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mandd@unisa.ac.za) on any omissions or errors.

DEGREE :	MED (INCLUSIVE EDUCATION)	(98443)
TITLE :	Working title: STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF STUDENTS WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENT IN THE TVET SECTOR AS AN APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	
SUPERVISOR :	Prof S NTOMBELA	
ACADEMIC YEAR :	2018	
TYPE:	RESEARCH PROPOSAL	
SUBJECTS REGISTERED:	MPEDU91 Master Proposal - Education	

As soon as the research proposal has been accepted you have to register for the research component, i.e. the dissertation or thesis during the prescribed registration period.

Yours faithfully,

Prof QM Temane  
Registrar (Acting)



## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

My name is Sinnah Lenyai, a student researcher at UNISA under the supervision of Prof S. Ntombela. I am studying towards a Masters of Education in Inclusive Education.

As per our appointment, I have come to interview you on the research;

### ADDRESSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS TO LEARNING AT TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE LEVEL.

I will take notes as well as record the interview and like I mentioned in the consent form, everything will be kept confidential.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO LECTURERS

1. What Do you understand by language barrier?

2. Are there any students who experience language barriers in your classroom?

3. How do you identify students with language barriers?

4. Which method do you use to support students experiencing language barriers?

5. What is your attitude towards teaching students with language barriers
6. What type of language barriers are they experiencing?

7. Do you have enough resources that offers effective teaching to students barrier?

8. What training have you received on giving support to students with language barriers?

9. How does your Senior lecturer or your HoD support you in this regard?

10. The students you have been supporting, how have they responded to your support?

11. How does the Student Support Services in your college support you in dealing with this barrier to learning?

12. What support do you think you need to better support your students in this regard?

## APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ORBIT TVET COLLEGE

TITLE: ADDRESSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS TO LEARNING AT TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE LEVEL

Date: 27 MAY 2019

MR D.F MOKOENA  
THE PRINCIPAL  
014 592 7014  
Email: [dmokoena@orbitcollege.co.za](mailto:dmokoena@orbitcollege.co.za)

Dear Mr Mokoena

I, Sinnah Lenyai am doing research under supervision of Prof. S.Ntombela, a Professor in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a MEd at the University of South Africa.

The aim of the study is to explore how lecturers identify students who experience language barriers, establish how these students are supported once identified and to identify the kind of assistance available for lecturers in dealing with language barriers in the classroom.

The study will entail the lecturers and students, the participation in the study will be voluntary. It will involve interviews in a mutually agreed site after college hours. Participant will be granted permission to withdraw from the study if they wish at any time without negative results.

The research study will be useful for the college personnel on addressing language barriers to learning in the classroom. There will be no anticipated risks that the participant will be exposed to.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail no value of judgement will be made under circumstances, participant will be informed of the finding of the study by availing a copy of my final thesis to each of the selected TVET college libraries and each will be given one copy if they put a request.

I will be very pleased if my request is favourably and speedily considered. Yours sincerely

  
Lenyai S

Lecturer

## **APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Date: 27 May 2019

**Title: ADDRESSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS TO LEARNING AT TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE LEVEL**

### **DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

My name is Sinnah Lenyai and I am doing research under the supervision of Prof S Ntombela, a Professor in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a Masters of Education at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled; Addressing language barriers to learning at technical vocational education and training college in the Bojanala District, Madibeng area.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

This study is expected to collect important information that could help lecturers in addressing language barriers to learning in the classroom. The outcomes in this study will contribute to the body of knowledge and to share them with all the stake holders to find ways of dealing with students experiencing language barriers in the classroom.

### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

You are invited because you are dealing with students experiencing language barriers in the classroom and you are likely to have knowledge and more information about the phenomenon under study. I obtained your contacts from the college.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study involves a semi-structured interview whereby I will write down your responses as well as tape record them. The questions to be asked are the ones shown on the document I just gave you, but you might be requested to kindly elaborate on certain responses. An approximate duration of 1 hour might be needed for the interview.



## **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation.

If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

## **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of the study, in the education industry, lecturing staff, parents, students and the society at large will benefit through gaining useful knowledge to better understand the problem of language barriers experienced by students in the classroom.

## **ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There are no anticipated risks that the participant will be exposed to. In case of any injury which is unlikely, I will look for help from the Head of Department and I will contact my supervisor for assistance.

## **WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCH AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee in which a confidentiality agreement will be signed. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

However, your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. Privacy will be protected in any publication of the information and individual participants will not be identifiable in such reports.

## **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the supervisor's office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Where necessary, hardcopies will be destroyed permanently by shredding or burning them, and electronic copies will be deleted permanently from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software program.

## **WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no payment or incentives for participating in this study.

## **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, Unisa, copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

## **HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Sinnah Lenyai on (072 036 6684) or email at: [lenyaisinnah@gmail.com](mailto:lenyaisinnah@gmail.com). The findings are accessible for five years.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof. S. Ntombela on 0124812881 or email at: [ntombs@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ntombs@unisa.ac.za).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you



Sinnah Lenyai

## APPENDIX E: CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, \_\_\_\_\_(participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) SINNAH LENYAI

*Sinnya*

*28 May 2019*

Researcher's signature

Date





















## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.1. Participating lecturers' biographical data

Table 4.2. Themes and sub-headings extracted from interview data